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MEN OF THE WORLD, MID HUM AND STIR, RING OF ANVIL AND FRET OF LOOM,
BUILD FOR YOUR THOUGHTS A THOROUGHFARE, KEEP FOR YOUR SOULS A SILENT ROOM

# THE POETRY REVIEW

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# INDEX TO VOLUME XXXII

## ARTICLES AND POEMS


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| *Adversary, The.* T. Weston Ramsey | 10 |
| *Against the New Order.* Geoffrey Dobbs | 313 |
| Ambassador Poet, An. Harold Goad | 17 |
| American Poetry, Dynamics of. Alice Hunt Bartlett | 41, 127, 177, 235, 305, 372 |
| *Another War.* Geoffrey Masefield | 210 |
| Another Who Lives On. John Waller | 277 |
| *Apologia.* Christmas Humphries | 287 |
| *Apostasy.* E. Margaret Hough | 12 |
| Apprehension of Poetry and Youth. Dr. John Murray | 213 |
| Auden and his New Year Letter. Herbert Palmer | 227 |
| *Auden in America, To.* Harry Sefton | 49 |
| *Banshee over England.* Redcliffe McKie | 303 |
| *Beauty.* Margery Smith | 88 |
| Berry, Francis, the Poetry of | 163 |
| *Best is Yet to Be, The.* Aidan Clarke | 136 |
| Better than Love. Ruth Pitter | 75 |
| *Blatant Beast, The.* Richard Church | 9 |
| Britain and the Defence of Poets | 44 |
| Butcher, Baker, Candlestick Maker, The. John Waller | 25 |
| Cambridge Poetry. John Waller | 40 |
| *Champs Elysees.* Juliet Young | 302 |
| *Christina Rossetti.* Ellode Collins | 349 |
| *Clearwell.* Nancy Dickinson | 225 |
| *Comfort for the Highbrow-beaten.* E. V. Fleming | 52 |
| *Coming of Winter, The.* R. E. Boulton | 94 |
| *Communion.* M. Edgelow | 94 |
| *Compensation.* Eleanour M. Hough | 226 |
| *Concert Pianist.* M. Edgelow | 40 |
| Continuity of Poetry, The. Various | 36 |
| Controversial Views on Great Poets | 112 |
| *C.O. and the Tribunal, The.* D. Horne | 201 |
| Correspondence | 44, 181, 241 |
| *Cross Roads.* Joan Eastman | 72 |
| *Death-History.* N. K. Cruickshank | 285 |
| *Decline of Irish Poetry.* R. Greacen | 345 |
| Defence of Age. D. E. Greville | 181 |
| *Desolation.* P. E. Leaver | 262 |
| *Devil's Advocate, The.* Nevinson | 13 |
| Diversity of Gifts, A. John Murray | 379 |
| *Dunkerque.* A. E. Johnson | 360 |
| *Dunkirk.* Cullen Jones | 301 |
| Dynamics of American Poetry. Alice Hunt Bartlett | 41, 127, 177, 235, 305, 372 |
| *Eliot, T. S., and the Lay Reader.* E. M. Stephenson | 289 |
| *Elizabeth to Churchill.* Alethea Todd Alderson | 335 |
| *England.* C. Heaton-Ross | 367 |
| *English Lyric, The.* Laurence Binyon | 325 |
| *Epistle to a Friend.* E. R. Binnington | 84 |

# INDEX TO VOLUME XXXII


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| *Epitaph.* J.E.M. | 199 |
| *Epitaph.* John Waller | 85 |
| *Epitaph.* Recliffe McKie | 355 |
| *Epitaph to a Brave Soldier.* J.E.M. | 108 |
| *Eugenie, Empress of the French.* Ellode Collins | 23 |
| *Euripides the Human.* W. F. Knight | 388 |
| *Evensong.* Brenda F. Skene | 86 |
| *Exile, The.* Pauline Procter | 315 |
| *Extremes Meet.* Roberta Shuttleworth | 351 |
| *Farewell.* L. M. Miller | 276 |
| *Farewell in War.* Melfin Jones | 74 |
| Flowers in Poetry. H. M. Wilson | 153 |
| *For Harold.* T. T. Wright | 148 |
| *Fragrance.* Olive Hasluck | 368 |
| *Garden, The.* D. Horne | 356 |
| Gerard Manley Hopkins. E. M. Stephenson | 31 |
| *Giant Killers, The.* W. S. Laurence | 273 |
| Gridley, Oscar C., Memoir of. Enid Mark | 263 |
| *Half-past Eleven.* V. M. Huggins | 150 |
| Hardy, Thomas, A Century of. J. H. B. Peel | 89 |
| *Her name is Democracy.* Roberta Shuttleworth | 211 |
| *Heron, The.* Margery Smith | 282 |
| *High Dive.* Reginald Akhurst | 355 |
| Homage to W. H. Davies. A. S. Cripps | 138 |
| Hopkins, G. M. E. M. Stephenson | 31 |
| *Hours of Peace.* G. D. Reeves | 386 |
| *How Great is your Beloved.* C. Humphreys | 137 |
| *Hymn for Airmen.* Robert Andrews | 52 |
| *Immortal.* E. Couchman | 276 |
| Impressions after the Chinese Manner. R. Shuttleworth | 139 |
| In Memoriam. D. W. R. Carr | 381 |
| *In Memoriam, Virginia Woolf.* Dallas Kenmare | 151 |
| Insecurity, in Speaking Verse. Lily Towers | 67 |
| *Intercession in Time of War.* A. Lynnford-Smith | 30 |
| *Isaiah in Clown's Dress.* Herbert Palmer | 281 |
| *Island in the War, The.* Anne Ridler | 197 |
| *Ivy, The.* G. R. Hamilton | 333 |
| *June, 1940.* Cynthia Palmer | 76 |
| *June, 1937.* Franklin Parker | 224 |
| Kipling. Roland Pertwee | 327 |
| *Knowledge.* W. F. Atkins | 234 |
| *Lake, The.* E. Curt Peters | 386 |
| *Lament.* Elizabeth Barrett | 272 |
| *Lermontov Centenary, The.* J. Bikerman | 205 |
| *Lethe.* Sarah Henthorne | 356 |
| *Letters from Paul.* Dorothy Trail | 222 |
| *Lion Front, The.* Fred G. Webb | 50 |
| *Listening to Browning.* Monica Pritchett | 331 |
| *Long-tailed Tits.* B. F. Skene | 302 |
| *Look and Listen.* Elspeth Grahame | 271 |

# INDEX TO VOLUME XXXII


PAGE

*Loss.* Gladys Hunkin - - - - - - - - - - - 146
*Love's Security.* Douglas Gibson - - - - - - - - - 354
Manifesto of The Poetry Society - - - - - - - - - 393
*Mariage de Convenance.* M. Johanson - - - - - - - - 284
Mark, Enid Windsor, Memoir of. C.B.T. - - - - - - - 266
*Marriage, 1940.* Douglas O'Hanlon - - - - - - - - 16
*Mathematician.* Joan Bevan - - - - - - - - - 49
*Melody of Words, The.* E. V. Fleming - - - - - - - - 82
*Men at the Top, The.* E. Kenyon - - - - - - - - 95
*Missive Courageous.* E. Hyde Ryan - - - - - - - - 54
Modern Korean Poetry - - - - - - - - - - 63
*Moon Crater.* Herbert Palmer - - - - - - - - - 147
*Morning.* J. H. B. Peel - - - - - - - - - - 135
*Mountaineers, The.* W. R. Latham - - - - - - - - 272
*Muse, To my.* W. Marshall - - - - - - - - - 389
Music and Poetry, Connection. Charles Kennedy Scott - - - - - 329
*New Flowers of Devon.* B. Githens - - - - - - - - 199
New Life. Ella D. Vinall - - - - - - - - - 138
New Romanticism, A. G. Wilson Knight - - - - - - - 163
Nicholas Rowe. Joyce Rowe - - - - - - - - - 54
*Night Bomber.* W. R. Latham - - - - - - - - - 108
*Night Raid on London.* Redcliffe McKie - - - - - - - 152
*Nocturne.* W. Skene Lawrence - - - - - - - - - 366
*Nocturne, 1941.* J. C. Lyth - - - - - - - - - 225
*None Wake You.* Phyllis Lyth - - - - - - - - - 348
*October's Child.* John Hewitt - - - - - - - - - 342
*Open Letter to Walter of the R.A.F., An.* Arthur Kreisman - - - - - 343
*Orchard in August, The.* E. Barrett - - - - - - - - 50
Ordinary Listener, The. D. E. Tomlin - - - - - - - 350
Owen, Wilfred, In Memory of. Edward - - - - - - - 136
Owen, Wilfred, Poetry of. Patricia - - - - - - - - 99
*Poet and War, A.* Peter Baker - - - - - - - - - 269
Poet who wrote no Verse, A. E. C. Peters - - - - - - - 141
Poets and Patriotism. E. V. Fleming and others - - - - - - 115
*Poets in Time of War.* Bertram Warr - - - - - - - - 136
*Poet's Tools, The.* Wrenne Jarman - - - - - - - - 195
Poetry. Reginald C. Eva - - - - - - - - - - 30
Poetry and the Middle Way. C. Humphries - - - - - - - 361
Poetry and Youth. Dr. John Murray - - - - - - - - 141
Poetry in Relation to Life. P. H. B. Lyon - - - - - - - 59
Poetry, Royal Academy of - - - - - - - - - - 319
*Political Prisoner, A.* Pauline Procter - - - - - - - - 162
*Poor at War, The.* N. K. Cruickshank - - - - - - - - 150
*Portman Square.* Mary Stella Ling - - - - - - - - - 53
*Portrait of a Lady Knitting.* L. Laurent - - - - - - - - 371
Powys Llewellyn. E. Curt Peters - - - - - - - - - 141
Premium Editor's Report, The - - 51, 125, 195, 265, 263, 318, 390
*Prophecy.* C. Alva Powell - - - - - - - - - - 22
*Prophecy.* J.E.M. - - - - - - - - - - - 288
*Quality in Modern Verse* - - - - - - - - - - 294

# INDEX TO VOLUME XXXII


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| *Questioners, The.* G. E. Merrick | 357 |
| *Rainbow's End.* G. E. Mullins | 52 |
| *Reply, A.* Patrick Stephenson | 332 |
| *Resurgence.* Margaret M. Berry | 225 |
| *Reverie.* Ellode Collins | 73 |
| Reviews | 36, 109, 255, 294, 379, 385 |
| *River, The.* Giva Dane | 359 |
| *Rosa Mystica, Turrie Evurnea.* E. H. W. Meyerstein | 21 |
| *Sanctuary.* L. H. Miller | 12 |
| *Sapphic Ode.* J. G. Royde-Smith | 97 |
| *Scene, a Forest.* Laurence Whistler | 69 |
| *Sea, The.* Sutherland Groom | 370 |
| *Secret Hurts, The.* Joyce Rowe | 396 |
| Shore in Time of War. M. Edgelow | 146 |
| *Song of Life, A.* Christmas Humphries | 390 |
| Spender, Stephen. John Waller | 277 |
| *Spring.* Margaret Smith | 15 |
| *Spring, 1941.* D. E. C. Tomlin | 203 |
| *Spring in the Mountains.* I. L. Serrailler | 287 |
| *Street in an old City.* L. K. Lawler | 233 |
| *Sursum Corda.* Phyllis Martin | 22 |
| *Suspense.* Rognvald Gunn | 97 |
| *Sweet Pretender.* Phyllis Lyth | 288 |
| Taliessin through Logres. Charles Williams | 277 |
| *Thank God for Changeless Things.* Chloris Heaton-Ross | 282 |
| *Things Eternal.* G. E. H. Jacobs | 16 |
| *Think on the Brave.* Grace B. Sherwood | 204 |
| *This Farming in Alta.* J. P. Simcox | 200 |
| *Three Poems from Harrow.* Livia Laurent | 133 |
| *Tides of Spring.* Irene C. Benson | 226 |
| Timelessness and Tyros. E. Curt Peters | 109 |
| *To a New Generation.* Rostrevor Hamilton | 11 |
| *To America.* Dulcie Eden Greville | 303 |
| *To Auden in America.* Harry Sefton | 49 |
| To England, from America. Various | 173 |
| *Tomorrow.* R. MacFadden | 204 |
| *To My Daughter.* W. D. Godin | 10 |
| *To My Daughter.* Harry Sefton | 354 |
| To my Muse. W. Marshall | 389 |
| *To the Unrewarded.* Margery Smith | 360 |
| *Tout Passe.* M. D. Cameron | 359 |
| Tradition, Art and England's Genius. Walter Burton | 337 |
| *Transition.* Hope Cooper | 210 |
| T. S. Eliot and the Lay Reader. E. M. Stephenson | 289 |
| *Turn o' the Year.* Christine Tomlin | 58 |
| *Twin Oracles.* Charles Whitby | 360 |
| *Twins of Self.* H. W. Nevinson | 85 |
| *Unwanted Quarrel, An.* A. G. Wilson | 97 |
| *Verse Loss.* Gladys Hunkin | 146 |
| Voice and Vision. Dallas Kenmare | 313 |

# INDEX TO VOLUME XXXII


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| *War Casualty.* F. H. Woodward | 286 |
| *Waves.* Irene Moody | 369 |
| *We, by Windows Watching.* J. E. Warren | 285 |
| *We Must Build Now.* Fiona Campbell | 87 |
| *When I am Old and Full of Sleep.* Edith A. Walker | 83 |
| *Where the Slant Elm Fingers.* E. Curt Peters | 82 |
| *Which Passeth Understanding.* E. Franklin Parker | 334 |
| *Widow by the Vistula.* G. Fitzgibbon | 263 |
| *Wild Swan.* M. Edgelow | 390 |
| Winter in Bethune. Alan Rook | 149 |
| *Wonder.* Roger Wark | 73 |
| You Swallows. Brenda F. Skene | 21 |


# LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| Akhurst, Reginald | 355 |
| Alderson, Alethea Todd | 335 |
| Andrew, Robert | 52 |
| Atkins, W. F. | 234 |
| Baker, Peter | 269 |
| Bangay, E. D. | 255, 385 |
| Barrett, Elizabeth | 50, 272 |
| Bartlett, Alice Hunt | 41, 127, 177, 235, 305, 372 |
| Berry, Margaret M. | 225 |
| Bikerman, J. J. | 204 |
| Binnington, E. R. | 84 |
| Binyon, Laurence | 325 |
| Boulton, R. E. | 94 |
| Braund, Annie C. | 58 |
| Burton, Walter | 337 |
| Cameron, M. D. | 359 |
| Campbell, Fiona | 87 |
| Carr, D. W. R. | 389 |
| Church, Richard | 9 |
| Clarke, Aidan | 44, 136 |
| Collins, Ellode | 23, 73, 349 |
| Cooper, Hope | 210 |
| Couchman, E. | 276 |
| Cripps, Arthur Shirley | 138 |
| Cruickshank, N. K. | 150 |
| Dane, Giva | 359 |
| Dickinson, Nancy | 225 |
| Dobbs, Geoffrey | 313 |
| Doole, Delia | 73 |
| Duncan, V. B. | 73 |
| Eastman, Joan | 72 |
| Edgelow, Marguerite | 40, 94, 146, 241, 390 |
| Eva, Reginald C. | 30 |
| F.E.M. | 199 |
| Fitzgibbon, Geraldine | 283 |
| Fleming, E. Vandermere | 52, 82, 115, 181, 255 |
| Gibson, Douglas | 354 |
| Githens, Beverley | 173, 191 |
| Goad, Harold | 17 |
| Godin, W. D. | 10 |
| Grahame, Elspeth | 271 |
| Greacen, Robert | 345 |
| Greville, Dulcie Eden | 181, 303 |
| Groome, I. Sutherland | 181, 370 |
| Groves, John E. | 173 |
| Gunn, Rognvald | 97 |
| Hamilton, G. Rostrevor | 11, 333 |
| Harris, E. Howe | 173 |
| Hasluck, Olive | 368 |
| Henthorne, Sarah | 356 |
| Hewitt, John | 342 |
| Hodges, Albert E. | 181, 241 |
| Horne, D. | 201, 356 |
| Hough, E. Margaret | 12, 226 |
| Huggins, V. M. | 150 |
| Humphries, Christmas | 137, 287, 390 |
| Hunkin, Gladys | 146 |

# INDEX TO VOLUME XXXII


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| Hyde, E. Ryan | 54 |
| Jacobs, C. E. H. | 16 |
| Jarman, Wreene | 195 |
| J.E.M. | 108, 288 |
| Johanson, Marguerite | 284 |
| Johnson, A. E. | 360 |
| Jones, Cullen | 241, 301 |
| Jones, Melfin | 74 |
| Kenmare, Dallas | 151, 315, 241 |
| Kenyon, Edward | 95 |
| King, Francis | 241 |
| Knight, Alice M. | 181 |
| Knight, G. Wilson | 163 |
| Knight, W. F. Jackson | 388 |
| Kreisman, Arthur | 343 |
| Langstroth, Sue Hall | 173 |
| Latham, W. R. | 108, 272 |
| Laurence, W. Skene | 273, 367 |
| Laurent, Livia | 133, 371 |
| Lawler, L. K. | 233 |
| Leaver, P. E. | 319 |
| Ledward, Patricia | 99 |
| Ling, Mary Stella | 53 |
| Lyon, P. H. B. | 59 |
| Lynnford-Smith, A. | 30 |
| Lyth, J. C. | 225 |
| Lyth, Phillis | 181, 288, 348 |
| Mair, Mary | 241 |
| Marshall, W. | 389 |
| Martin, Phyllis | 22 |
| Masefield, Geoffrey | 210 |
| McFadden, Roy | 204 |
| McKie, Redcliffe | 152, 303, 355 |
| Mears, E. Bailey | 173 |
| Merrick, G. E. | 357 |
| Meverstein, E. H. W. | 21 |
| Miller, L. H. | 12 |
| Miller, L. M. | 276 |
| Moody, Irene | 369 |
| Murphy, Gwendolyn | 181 |
| Murray, Dr. John | 213, 379 |
| Nevinson, Henry W. | 13, 85 |
| O'Hanlon, Douglas | 16 |
| Palmer, Cynthia | 76 |
| Palmer, Herbert | 147, 227, 281 |
| Parker, Franklin | 224, 334 |
| Peel, J. H. B. | 89, 135, 181 |
| Pertwee, Roland | 327 |
| Peters, E. Curt | 44, 82, 109, 141, 181, 336 |
| Pitter, Ruth | 75 |
| Powell, C. Alva | 22 |
| Procter, Pauline | 162, 315 |
| Ramsey, T. W. | 10 |
| Reeves, G. D. | 336 |
| Ridler, Anne | 197 |
| Rook, Alan | 115, 149, 319 |
| Ross, Chloris Heaton | 282, 367 |
| Rowe, Joyce | 56, 181, 396 |
| Royde-Smith, G. J. | 97 |
| Sansome, Clive | 44 |
| Scott, Charles Kennedy | 329 |
| Sefton, Harry | 49, 354 |
| Seraillier, Ian L. | 287 |
| Sherwood, G. Buchanan | 173, 204 |
| Shuttleworth, Roberta | 139, 211, 351 |
| Simcox, J. P. | 200 |
| Skene, Brenda F. | 21, 86 |
| Smith, Margaret | 15 |
| Smith, Margery | 88, 282, 368 |
| Smithers, Sir Waldron, M.P. | 115 |
| Stephenson, E. M. | 31, 130, 289, 383 |
| Stephenson, Patrick | 332 |
| Tomlin, Christine | 58, 203, 241, 350 |
| Tomlin, D. E. C. | 58, 203, 241, 350 |
| Towers, Lily | 67 |
| Trail, Dorothy | 222 |
| Vinall, Ella D. | 138 |
| Walker, Edith H. | 83, 241 |
| Waller, John | 25, 44, 85, 170, 181, 277 |
| Wark, Roger | 73 |
| Warr, Bertram | 136 |
| Warren, James E. | 285 |
| Webb, Fred G. | 50 |
| Whistler, Laurence | 69 |
| Whitby, Charles | 360 |
| Wilson, A. G. | 97 |
| Wilson, H. M. | 153 |
| Wilson, Sir Arnold | 56 |
| Williams, Charles | 77, 181 |
| Woodward, F. H. | 286 |
| Wright, T. T. | 148 |
| Young, Juliet | 302 |

# THE BLATANT BEAST

SHOULD the Minotaur come unto our land,
What will they do, who govern us?
Feed him with maidens, and the flower of youth,
Compounded promises and broken bond,
Our English law with its sweet core of truth?

What then, the monster glutted: will his lust,
Paddled in loveliness, with louring rim
Already closing over eyeballs dim
In the aftersleep of finished cruelty,
Will lust and strength desert him, make him sway
And slip into the filth that he has trodden,
Filth that was the beauty he has ridden?

Is that the trick; to gloze him with our best,
Lure him by sacrifice, let all our most
Treasured and ancient, treasured and youngest die
To make his feast, and then his funeral?

What say our governors to such strategy:
Will they accept it as our English way
Of hunting the blunt snout, the hoof, the fang,
The charging weight of armoured flesh and hide?
Or did we English learn another mode
Centuries since, and never since proved wrong,
To hold the Blatant Beast at bay before
He dares the sea, and drips upon our shore,
And snores with appetite, and roars to rend
All that is English in our English land?

We have our ways of peace, our ways of war.
We know the hunting of the Minotaur.

RICHARD CHURCH.

## THE ADVERSARY

THREE sultry days
And three dark nights,
By thorny ways,
On wind-swept heights,
I wrestled with thee,
My adversary.

Dark thy face with sullen frown,
Wide, bat-like wings to beat me down,
Curved talons to rend and tear,
And yet imponderable as air
—I could not seize thee anywhere.

Now I have thee by the throat
And hold thee, thou diminishest
In size and fierceness ; and thy coat
Of horn is but a silken vest.
Thine eyes, that yesterday were wild
With rage, are humble now and mild ;
And that dread mouth, that spouted flames,
Sleeps like a child tired out with games.

T. W. Ramsey.

## TO MY DAUGHTER

THESE I would have you love . . .
The hills and the driving rain,
Clouds and the sky above,
And the lazy plain :

The music the winds bear—
And the music of men too
Though born of a wild despair
Will comfort you :

Pictures and verse and flowers,
The beasts with patient eyes . . .
If these are the things you love,
Love never dies.

W. D. Godin.

## TO A NEW GENERATION

BOYS yet at school, you, doomed to the disorder
Of a wrecked world, escape those deadlier shocks
Of the old, the carefree fool, the careful hoarder
Of lifelong calculations in a strong-box.

Though the same lessons you are made to master
In classrooms and on playing-fields that won
Brave Waterloos on the highway to disaster
(" Like father," so they fondly think, " like son "),

Your eyes already see the ancient stairway
Break in mid air. The victory and smash
Present no primroses, no golfers' fairway,
No members' privilege, no easy cash.

Instead of keys, a ready-made solution,
Recipe for a golden afternoon,
You're dealt the uncertain cards of revolution,
Yet, born to honour, hold this certain boon—

To have seen, without a mask, the soul of Evil
In man degenerate, miserable, vile,
A far ignobler Faust, a bloodier Devil,
A force more brutal, a more filthy guile ;

To have seen those outer bulwarks of your fathers,
Good form and decency, not worth a song,
Nor compromise, nor culture that ingathers
The fruits of ease, incurious of wrong.

You face the utter need for new creation,
The spirit steeled in faith, the prophet voice,
Freedom, and discipline against damnation,
Stern vision, and uncompromising choice :

Yet with strange lightness of heart shall you journey,
The weights of our illusion cast away,
Riding to deadly fight as to a tourney,
Carrying the gospel of a different day.

G. Rostrevor Hamilton.

## SANCTUARY

WHEN the long clamour of the day is over,
And all the unforgiving tasks are done,
I fold the darkness round me as a cover,
Against the blaring of to-morrow's sun.

Now is my hour, filched from the hand of Time,
Time, that brooks no returning, no retreat,
Surrenders me the past, and so I climb
Among the stars again with hastening feet.

To-day, to-morrow, yesterday are blended,
All time is naught to me, and for the rest
I now return with futile yearning ended,
And sleep again within your breast.

L. M. Miller.

## APOSTASY

WHEN love departs, we look in cold disdain,
From outside, on the empty building where
Fond fancy made us see a lighted fane.
We leave it as we found it, dark and bare.

What if it be we clearly saw before
And now our eyes are dimmed by selfish grief?
The altar lights are glowing, but the door
Is barred against us by our unbelief!

Eleanor Margaret Hough.

Malabar Hill, Bombay.

# THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

## In Memoriam H.K.D.

ALL robed in white as heavenly angels stood
The Christ Church men on both sides of the aisle,
Themselves so gay they hardly spared a smile
As he came clattering up on soles of wood

(Leather wears out so soon and is so dear)
His shirt wide open lay without a tie,
His rusty gown provoked the fastidious eye,
His meagre poverty was all too clear.

You'd think no spirit inhabited the skull
The bony forehead and the lantern jaws,
Thin lips that never smiled for any cause,
And the sunk eyes, of cold defiance full.

He was a scholar once, and once would dine
At the High Table, was a priest himself!
How had he, then, been laid upon the shelf
Unfit for company with Dons divine?

They kept his seat in the Cathedral choir,
Canons made room for him as he went by,
But held meanwhile a half-averted eye,
Like doves when an old eagle flutters nigher.

Out in the Meadow Buildings he had rooms;
None but the scout had ever entered there;
Once he had lectured, but the room was bare,
He might as well have lectured to the tombs.

At night he walked alone, and spent the days
Perusing annals of the distant past;
His knowledge of man's wickedness was vast,
But knowledge brought him no reward or praise.

Of cardinal sins that are accounted seven
From youth to manhood he committed none,

But of all doctrines he went wrong in one—
He could believe in Hell but not in Heaven.

That was enough to damn him to the Devil;
What was the good of Faith or desperate strife
For holiness if our eternal life
Were but continuance of eternal evil?

Then, all in vain Fathers and Saints of old
Had preached the glory of God's sacrifice
For Man's redemption at a mortal price,
And of beatitude to come had told?

What priest would care to weigh the balance well
Between the righteous and the wicked? All
Would readily to sinful error fall
If, without Heaven, they still believed in Hell.

Despised, rejected, martyred for his faith,
He clung to one too logical belief—
Since all is evil, evil is the chief
Goal of mortality in life and death.

Years glided past in pleasant Oxford town,
Blithe youths played ball and rowed upon the river;
But up the nave those clattering shoes went ever,
The cavernous face and the thin, rusty gown.

Then the bombs fell, and on his lonely bed
The martyr lay untended in the night
Mid grisly curtains drawn to dim the light;
"Here's the assurance of my faith," he said.

"Denounced long years, now I am justified.
As witness to the truth, heap up my bones
In your Cathedral's devastated stones.
Faith at the last has conquered!" So he died.

For years the Devil spewed his filth about,
Blasting the world with universal wars

As in a conflict of the shooting stars
That flash and blaze and suddenly go out.

But our immortal Oxford carried on;
Men drilled at arms and flew up to the skies,
Old Earth to them was still a paradise
With heaven in prospect when the game was done.

Outside the Precincts in a corner bare,
There lies a stone, inscribed by his own hand:
"*Thank God! I did their foolish hopes withstand;*
*For life is Hell itself, and I'm not there.*"

HENRY W. NEVINSON.

## SPRING

THIS is the time to be born,
When Spring flings
Her thirsty, bursting buds to the morn,
And the thrush, torn
With the joy, joy, joy of it,
Sings of it,
Sings!

This is the time to rejoice,
When the skies sigh,
And the noisy boys, with one voice,
Shouting for choice,
With the love, love, love of it,
Cry of it,
Cry!

This is the time to run,
When valleys ring
With song, and the growing sun
(Could she) would sing
Of the fire, fire, fire of it,
Swing of the
Spring!

MARGERY SMITH.

## 1940 MARRIAGE

IN thee, in me,
Sweet love, I see
A great and noble company,
A host of men who, dead long past,
Yet in us live, and in us last.
Within us two is there a line
Of those who'll live in future time
Less torn, perhaps, by war?

Heredity;—
Posterity;—
For thou art She, and I am He,
And in us past and future meet,
But present mire engulfs our feet,
This muddy gift our parents gave;
We do not thank. More grief the grave
Did not engulf it too.

Fertility?
Sterility?
I doubt much which most sad may be.
The worst glooms of antiquity
Cannot have shed so thick a pall;
Even when vinegar and gall
He drank there followed Easter light.
This lethal, cruel and Christless night
Destroys our babes unborn.

DOUGLAS O'HANLON.

## THINGS ETERNAL

THESE things eternal be,
Life and the light
And the unending sea;
And that vast deep
Where aeons wed infinity;
And truth, and right;
And the Divine Diversity
That dwells beyond the night!

Singapore, S.S. 26.8.40 C. E. H. JACOBS.

# AN AMBASSADOR POET

CONSIDERING the most successful diplomatic career of Lord Rennell of Rodd, who must be the "doyen" of British Ex-Ambassadors, we may well wish that more of His Majesty's representatives abroad were chosen from among the poets, for poets are endowed with a deeper insight and a more intuitive understanding of individuals and foreign nations than the majority of mankind. At one time it was quite a frequent custom to employ great men of letters upon foreign missions ; Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, Testi, Bembo, Castiglione and Machiavelli were among those to whom Italian cities or princes entrusted special embassies to foreign states, while Juan Escrivà, Hertado de Mendoza, Quevedo y Villega, Pastor Diez, and Garcia y Tassara were similarly employed by Spanish monarchs. But England and France seem seldom to have used their poets for this service, if we accept Dan Chaucer, who was sent by Edward the Third to France and Italy, and Andrew Marvell who accompanied Lord Carlisle on his difficult Missions from King Charles the Second to Muskovy and the Scandinavian courts. The United States sent Russell Lowell as Ambassador to Queen Victoria, and she was represented in many foreign capitals, and particularly in Paris, by Lord Lytton. France has had one great living poet, Paul Claudel, among her recent ambassadors, and at the outbreak of the last Great War. Sir Cecil Spring-Rice was at Washington and Sir Rennell Rodd at Rome. It should be noted that the countries to which these last two were accredited joined the Allies before the fight was over. But alas, to-day nations are only too often represented by their politicians, who are naturally men of party and political prejudice.

Lord Rennell served in many lands, in Egypt, Abyssinia, Zanzibar and Sweden, as well as in Greece and Italy, where he was the best loved of ambassadors and where he found his deepest poetic inspirations. He called his best-known book *The Violet Crown* in homage to the lovely city in which he lived so many years.

Here is the explanation of the title—a description of Athens seen at sunset from the Acropolis :—

" The last rays light the portal, a gold wave
Runs up the column to the architrave,
Lingers about the gable and is gone :—
Parnés, Hymettus, and Pentelicon
Show shadowy violet in the after-rose,
Cithaeron's ridge and all the islands close
The mountain ring, like sapphires o'er the sea,
And from this circle's heart aetherially
Springs the white altar of the land's renown,
A marble lily in a violet crown."

The book is rich in exquisite description, with delicate touches of nature and observation of Greek life and scenery, each picture waking its appropriate classical association suffused with sentiment and gentle melancholy. All who know Greece and many who love her only in imagination will always cherish *The Violet Crown* for the sake of these lovely pictures :—

" For men will hymn your haunted skies,
And seek your holy streams,
Until the soul of music dies
And Earth is done with dreams."

*The Violet Crown* is truly the expression of a poet-diplomatist. It does not contain a word that is not in perfect taste, that startles or offends ; not a word that is crude, vain, strident or far-fetched or that suggests suspicion of insincerity by exaggeration, mystification or obscurity. All is infallibly courteous, wise and restrained—distinction with discretion, wisdom without cynicism, eloquence without rhetoric, delicacy without preciosity, learning without pedantry. All the more precious to the lover of poetry are poems such as these, if only for their contrast with the manner of the younger poets, who often seem to be striving to produce effects by obvious effort to scream in their singing, to avoid the obvious by surprises of rhythm, rhyme, metaphor or epithet.

With *The Violet Crown* in its later edition, were published several new poems inspired by the beauty of Italy. " Spring in the Campagna " and " Ninfa " bear witness to the poet's

love of the lonely wilderness and the wide marshes which the energy of new Italy has drained and developed to a healthier if less fascinating region. But Lord Rennell's services to English poetry in Rome have other monuments ; one in the preservation of the graves of Keats and Shelley, when a corrupt municipality with the consent of the government of Giolitti wished to drive an unwanted road right through the romantic loveliness and sanctity of the old Protestant cemetery, and another in the purchase of the house in which Keats died, hard by the steps of Santa Trinità, and its dedication as a memorial library for the study of our poets. For these great services alone Lord Rennell's term at the Roman Embassy would be for ever memorable.

But this last little book, *War Poems*, strikes a deeper, if less purely lovely, chord of thought and feeling. It is full of that deep patriotism which all true Englishmen must feel when they return to dwell in their native land after many years of foreign service—their vision quickened, as it seems, by unfamiliarity. Some of these poems are already known to members of the Poetry Society from the poet's reading from them about two years ago. They no longer are inspired by a merely outward and material loveliness so much as by insight into an inward spiritual beauty, the bond of union which to-day binds all the peoples of our land and empire together :

" If my work is over and if in vain I had hoped at the close of life
That peace would fall with the evening, not passion and hate and strife
I can still give thanks as my sun goes down for one treasure of passing worth,
The faith that was staunch to the Motherland, of her sons at the end of the earth."

Full of years and of honours, his sons embarked upon distinguished careers and his daughters married ; he could still contemplate a last voyage into the unknown, like his hero, the indomitable Odysseus—as he sings in his epilogue to his beloved helpmeet and companion Lady Rennell :

" We know the lure of sail and spur,
The call of the unknown ;

And why should brain or heart demur,
When the young birds are flown?
A hand that beckoned us to roam
Determined you and I
Should keep no anchor grounded home
But wander till we die.
A world yet unexplored extends
Past yon horizon's rim,
And when the bounded unknown ends
The unknowable is dim;
But so we pass with unbowed head
And eyes towards the sun;
We reck not where the tent be spread
When the last march is done."

But as years go on his soul turns with a deeper faith to a wider outlook, expressed with great dignity and reserve in a most beautiful descriptive poem called "Fresh Woods and Pastures New"—which, though consisting of less than a hundred lines of blank verse, is the longest in this slender volume.

"And yet assurance, not in words expressed,
Not issuing from a presence palpable,
But echoed from a world beyond my ken,
Convinces some immortal sense in me
Of potency to grasp all amplitudes,
To outsoar the finite, compassing the whole,
And all that is, but for us is not yet,
Because God's now is one in time or space."

Poetry lovers have a deep debt to Lord Rennell, not only for his poems, but also for the encouragement that his last book affords as a proof that he at least has kept the sacred flame alive through a long life of wide and manifold activities to an age when so many poets, to their own deep loss, have allowed it to die away. HAROLD GOAD.

The inclusion in the Oxford editions of Standard Authors of the poetical works of Robert Browning from 1833 to 1868 and the shorter poems thereafter (5s.)—a closely packed volume of almost 700 pages in small type, double column, has caused the *Times Literary Supplement* to examine the position in our day of that "indefatigable and intrepid adventurer into poetic form and sound"—not a deep or elaborate or zealous survey but admitting that Browning was never at fault on one subject, human love in all its shades and degrees.

## ROSA MYSTICA, TURRIS EBURNEA

THE discipline that we impose
Upon our brain's no brittle toy,
But a divinely spiral rose,
A tower, a childlike joy.

An ivory tower? Yea, and one, too,
That the world-cynic's mammoth tusk
Dashes not from its destined blue
At Civilization's dusk.

Then fear not, Poets; the towers ye build
Of blinding immaterial bricks
Outlast earth's Babel; be fulfilled
Your dream beyond the Styx!

There, as wise Pindar sang, abides
The Tower of Cronos; thither goes
A secret faithful brain, whose bride's
Both milk-white Keep and Rose.

E. H. W. Meyerstein.

## YOU SWALLOWS AND YOU MIGRATORY BIRDS

YOU swallows and you migratory birds
That over the water wing to instinctive safety,
Be to our children leaving the wintry fortress
Of war—symbolic presage, happy omen.

Cover like a cloud of witnesses
Their fateful journey, whisper the sure reunion,
Certain haven. In holy intuition is their keeping
Though they were sped with fear and soundless weeping.

The souls of children are dear to the heart of swallows;
Under their eaves they build, and the baby's laughter
Leaps in blue air like joyful twittering.
Bring to them English spring in the day's awakening.

Brenda F. Skene.

## PROPHESY

THE secrets of the heart
will come to sudden light.
The one unspoken thought
will tremble into words.

The ordered pulse will leap,
the quiet logic swoon.
The discipline of years
will die an easy death.

There is a place, there is
a certain time will come;
And all the precious care
will not prevent it then.

The unforeseen will happen,
the impossible occur.
Things that should not must,
and things that cannot will.

CLARENCE ALVA POWELL.

## SURSUM CORDA

GRIEVE not too much because the squandered years
Of doubt and self-sufficiency's mistrust
Have ground ideals to a scattered dust;
Exchanged our quickening hopes for barren fears;
Though, from our failure bred, a terror sears
Our tired spirit with its wanton lust,
While all we have thought precious turns to rust
Beneath the falling of our futile tears.

This is not all; Eternal verity
Immaculate persists. This tortured earth
Yet swings free in the universe, a part
Of one eternal plan. We hold the key;
And things sublime and of the greater worth
Throb on for ever in God's mighty heart.

PHYLLIS MARTIN.

## EUGENIE, EMPRESS OF THE FRENCH

WHERE trees like fountains drop their flickering gloom,
Like sorrowing waterfalls
Of tears upon the cheeks of marble fauns,
When summer's bloom.
Gold pollened air and golden dappled lawns
Light the great halls
Then, she is there.

The rustle of silks and the rustle of leaves
And a faint dead brightness.
The voices of the ladies of France—
Oh who believes
Time's turned, and soon—so soon will break the trance
All's lightness—
She has not learned.

Like faint coloured flowers they cluster round her,
Bird bosoms, brittle waists.
And she with her spun-glass beauty floats
Beneath the blur
Of leaves, of limes—their blossoms fall like motes.
The long day hastes
And time with times.

Night is not night when the chandeliers
Scintillate blue shadows,
And lily-candle's budding flames illume.
The mandoliers
With their golden fingers, brush off the night's black bloom,
Their thrumming—goes,
And comes—and lingers.

Columbine gauze, tulle, silver spangled lisse,
They sway—white blossom girls
Empaled on their dark partners' branching arms.
The quadrilles cease
And turbaned chaperons wait beneath the palms ;—

The dawn unfurls
One silvery strand.

The fret, fret of diamonds chafering silk,
She sheds them and they lie
Frosting the dressingtable's furbelows.
While pale as milk,
In airy peignoire like a loose white rose,
Her fingers pry
Each perfumed jar.

The alabaster lamp burns whispering blue.
The bubbles of her hair
Hiss, clouding goldenly beneath the comb,
Small night winds strew
A scent of dying roses faint as foam;
Sickly despair,
Soft crying.

Slow crumbling tissue, shadow on the dial—
Even as the palace sleeps
The blood-red fruit waxes beneath the moon,
A little while
And all will be a ghostly bygone tune:
Her lamp flame leaps
And dies—all's still.

ELLODE COLLINS.

### A DANIEL COME TO JUDGEMENT

(*To the Editor of* THE POETRY REVIEW)

SIR,—I think the following passage from an article by Hilaire Belloc in the *Sunday Times* should be reprinted in THE POETRY REVIEW, if only for the telling, though, like all generalizations, dangerous expression of opinion contained in the last eight words:

> "... the way in which the new moon, just at her virginal best, dies away into the western mist and disappears from our sight is admirably pathetic. It is a theme I should recommend to the poets had they not already got hold of it in herds and were they not still grinding it out by the page-full. It is true that I have seen none of her in what is called 'Modern Verse'—but then, modern verse has nothing to do with poetry." E. CURT PETERS.

# THE BUTCHER, THE BAKER, THE CANDLESTICK MAKER

*The Gathering Storm*, by William Empson. (Faber. 6s.)
*The Man Coming Towards You*, by Oscar Williams. (Oxford University Press. $2.00. Humphrey Milford. 11s. 6d.)
*Blind Men's Flowers are Green*, by Rayner Heppenstall. (Secker and Warburg. 5s.)

THERE is something wrong with all three of these books. Mr. Empson's poems are either too condescending or too obscure; they stick in the teeth, irritate and annoy; he chops at poetry, cuts it neatly up and places it on a slab as much as to say: "Here we are! Now figure this out!" Mr. Williams on the other hand is too turgid. He writes a lot about the same subject, stuffs his poems with dough and makes too many of them as indigestible as new bread. And Mr. Heppenstall—to my mind the best of these writers—has really not bothered to make up a book at all. He has thrown between two covers what he had by him and the result is like a Christmas tree, sparsely covered, some of the presents too slight to be used for anything except gifts to people one doesn't care particularly about, but on the whole sufficient candles. The tree makes a fair enough glow in this dark world.

Mr. Empson's poetry is terribly boring because, as he himself admits, it is like a puzzle that has to be worked out. But I do not like puzzles and having worked out the simpler of Mr. Empson's I do not feel that the answers are sufficiently entertaining or remarkable to make the pastime of working them out worth while. Mr. Empson is too much the precise intellectual, and I do not find in him that sensuousness of appeal which Heppenstall has and with which I expect to be delighted—or at any rate intrigued—in poetry which is at all obscure.

Mr. Empson cutting a dash at some of his contemporaries, such as the revolutionaries, the surrealists, the "Up the boys" group and so on, writes:

> But all conventions have their pomp
> And all styles can come down to noise.

So much for Empson on others, but what does his own style come down to? Certainly not noise, but does it come down to anything at all? It is cold and stale like dead meat on a slab, impassive where it should be impressive, tricky where it should triumphant. Admittedly the technique is considerable, but what is it doing apart from chopping and chiselling?

> They bled an old dog dry yet the exchange rills
> Of young dog blood gave but a month's desires;
> The waste remains, the waste remains and kills.

Sometimes, as in "Ignorance of Death," Empson can be exact without exciting this nostalgia. And his lines describing the Sphinx are sufficiently effective.

> The wretched girl, still raddled with Napoleon's paint,
> Nose eaten by a less clear conqueror,
> Still orientated to the average dawn,
> Behind, Sahara, before, Nile and man
> A toy abandoned, sure, after so many,
> That the next sun will take her for a walk,
> Still lifts a touching dog's face eager for a sign.

Yet it would, I think, repay Empson to incorporate into his work something more of the touch he gives to the three translations of Miss Hatakeyama of which "The Small Bird to the Big" is probably the most successful. And it is significant that his piece "A Smack at Auden," a parody written in Auden's simple manner, is probably the best poem in the book.

> Shall we make a tale, boys, that things are sure to mend,
> Playing bluff and hale, boys, waiting for the end?
> It will be born stale, boys, stinking to offend,
> Dying ere it fail, boys, waiting for the end.

But the subject matter, as I believe Geoffrey Grigson pointed out at the time, seems to hit not at where Auden is but at where he once was.

As to "The Man Coming Towards You," if I had read one poem of Oscar Williams' or even five poems I would look upon him as a poet, possibly of some importance, but a whole heap of poems nearly all of them saying the same thing in the same way produces a feeling of surfeit and later of flatness that is almost unbearable. Williams' poetry is

a protest against the age; he sees real civilization falling before the welter of machinery, real minds falling away before the machine mind. The man who is coming towards you is a man entirely helpless, who does as he is told, who obediently pulls a ticket from a ticket machine. He is a dwarf and a puppet, a slave of the times while the machines go roaring on:

> Valkyrie headlines tear the brain
> And shriek above the hills of men.

It is all like this. There seems nowhere for real man to escape. He can only discover what is discovered for him. For a free life has so many potential enemies in the Caféteria, the Railway Station, the Radio, the Subway, Money and Economic problems, the audiences in Cinemas and Theatres, and the Daily Newspaper where:

> baby-eyed and bargain faced
> The promise leaps the printed page;
> There is no safety from bad taste
> And scarcely any from the age.

Individual man is lost, a hunted animal, a midget, almost a speck of dust. There remains only the private, the personal escape. And this is described in "The Dwarf of Disintegration" in lines that perhaps display Williams at his best.

> Now that the battle is on, keep off the palace grounds,
> You can hear the dwarf rummaging in the elephant inside:
> It's better to draw a curtain of birds around your eyes,
> Or fall into the picture book under the thumb of a landslide—
>
> Than to come upon spiders eating the iris of the eyeball,
> Or glimpse the yellow dwarf digesting the members of princes,
> Or see famous paintings loll, like tongues, from their frames
> Into a roomful of heroes pretending to harass pretences.
>
> So run into the first thicket of verbs, the nest of deeds,
> Place a skyline between yourself and the grandiose emblem,
> For the inquisition wears the hypocritical jowls of a palace,
> There's nothing here to salvage, and yours is another problem.

Yet as Williams continues with this theme of his, the warnings become too easily a shriek. Often he places too

many phrases in apposition, taking too many words to say a simple thing. Then it is that a poem like " Song for December 24th " comes in its simplicity as something of a relief; and I am glad to find such a personal touch as that in the poem " On the sudden Death of a Young Casual Acquaintance " :

I thought for long you were just another person in doubt,
One of the millions common as the daylight is everywhere,
One of those usual people that one meets with all about,
But now I see that you were capable of an immense despair.

It would, I think, be fair to say that there are not enough people in these poems and too many machines. And stylistically Mr. Williams frequently churns through the waves like a pleasure steamer; there is a lot of noise but his passage becomes monotonous. In fact—to change the metaphor back to the original—he bakes too many loaves and not enough good bread.

Now for the delicate gleams in *Blind Men's Flowers are Green*. Rayner Heppenstall writes religion mysteriously and with a glitter. " A Friend of Macarius," " St. Stephen's Word," " Vigil," " Charm in December," " Quiet Song " and several other poems, even including " Homage to Leon Bloy," provide an expression of faith that is oddly aloof while at the same time brilliant and piercing. As in a solitary room, Heppenstall, a hermit almost, deeply considers a life that is beyond life, a spiritual existence which those who dwell in the flesh will never entirely understand.

*Life slide away from the willing bone*
*And leave a happy ghost or none.*

This is matter for admiration, and few who are of Heppenstall's turn of mind are able to write as well as he. Then I like " The Mnemonic " and " Sonnets of Planetary Rule " which are concerned with an astrological symbolism last used exactly by Chaucer. The glitter is here again, a glitter of fatalism becoming dangerously attractive, just as when Saturn in " Palamon and Arcite " takes the stage to cry : " Myne is the ruine of high halles." But Heppenstall's poems must be read, not described. Imagine for instance

the still hushed sadness in " The Lament of the Young Men " for Pelagia, a young maiden who has recently entered a nunnery.

Where is the woman Pelagia, whom we covered with pearls and called
Margarita ?
She is gone into the place of shadows and hushed voices
Where the ghosts of our dead gods mutter in the corners. . . .

This is not warm poetry ; it is haunted, and the lights in it are those stars that shine sharply in the sky on cold nights, or candles lighting a Christmas tree in a dark room. Thus " By Reason of His Pleasure :

A dule of turkies, a walk of snipes
And a fall of woodcocks, a down of hares,
Waiting below for the fellow who wears
My lady's favour and plays on the pipes.

A sounder of wild swine, rout of wolves,
Assembled together because of the cold
Or a watch of nightingales, charm of goldfinches,
Met into one place to make the night full of us.

A bed of lovers, the midnight begun
With a case of lutes and the stars in their courses,
Muster of peacocks, harass of horses,
A pride of lions and Three Made One.

These poems of Rayner Heppenstall's might have been written at any period. And so while they will not have as great an immediate public perhaps as those of Empson or Williams, they are more certain of enduring. Heppenstall is a poet apart, a solitary ; the age does not concern him. And so while Empson may become the property of pedants, and Williams possibly the subject matter of historians, Heppenstall's candles are likely to remain still brightly burning, though the room may be dark and the guests few. For though the viands of the butcher and the baker may provide more immediate pleasure, yet are they soon digested and forgotten ; but the man who fashions candlesticks provides something that will shed a small light around it so long as it is tended.

JOHN WALLER.

## INTERCESSION IN TIME OF WAR

LORD of all great and little things—
Of flaming suns and tiny woodland springs,
The writhing worm, sweet birds of endless song,
Of silver flashing fish and insect throng;
Lord of the landscape and the forest trees,
Of flowers and plains and surging coloured seas;
Lord of the mountains, piled in crag and peak,
Lord of the war-like, Saviour of the weak:
O hear our prayer in these long days of woe,
Lend us a courage naught may overthrow!

Lord of the cottage, of an Empire's might,
Foil to all evil, Guardian of the right;
Lord of the sacred fount that we call Life,
Lord of all peoples, Conqueror of strife:
Grant that we be worthy, fitted for Thy plan,
So sanctify, O Lord, the ways of sinful man!

For when a builder chooses stones to build,
Or poets seek for words sweet songs to yield,
Some are rejected, useless, cast aside—
Abandoned vessels shattered by the tide;
So Thou, Great Builder, in creative thought
Hast thrown apart some things which Thou hast wrought—
The dinosaur, such creatures from Thy plan
As pterodactyls, dim primeval man:

O Lord, grant that Thy servants in Thy sight
May useful be and keep within Thy light;
Not unto darkness, Lord, our footsteps tread,
To Thy effulgent Throne may we be led.
Father of all creation, lend us power,
Forsake us not in this the testing hour!

ARTHUR LYNNFORD-SMITH.

REGINALD C. EVA, whose *Daily Telegraph* poem has been quoted widely in the United States, as evidence of our unbreakable spirit, writes of POETRY:

She weaves no gown to clothe a barren fact
Or cloistered virtue of a creed compact
In temple or in tome. A fairer dress
She weaves, to veil a nobler loveliness:
Beneath the garment of her cadences,
And yet revealed, Truth's living presence is.

# GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS: A TIMELY NOTE

THE gilded coach of poetry is travelling comfortably along the well-known route; its team of horses beating out the accustomed timbre of the road. No knotty points arise, either through broken wheels or snapped harness, but all runs with smooth prosperity and recurring rhythm. The occupants rest languidly, their minds entertained and soothed by stories of great deeds, azure skies and pastoral scenes.

But who is this black-plumed knight riding in whirls of dust to windward? Yes! Riding straight for the royal coach!

"Halt," he has cried masterfully. "The route of this coach should lie over the rugged hill beyond. From its shoulder, there are new landscapes and further adventure to find!"

Confusion and talking follows. Then the spirit of poetry graciously inclines to the experiment; besides, this black knight has intrigued her with his boldness, and she will not show fear of such a journey.

This could be the allegory that would picture the advent of Gerard Manley Hopkins. That his predecessors led up to his poetic innovations is not denied, any more than that it is possible to deny that any road in England can eventually lead to a specified place—but there is always the geographical point where the name of the specified place appears on the white-painted signpost.

Hopkins is the name written on the signpost leading to Modern Poetry. Under the old black lettering of Running Rhythm with its stress, slack, appear other newer names—Rocking Rhythms; Counter-point Rhythm; Sprung Rhythm and Outriding. We are met by loaded words whose weights carry "rushed-in" slacks, pauses, exclamations, with variations of Sound-Speed within a regular measure; much like Fred Astaire's new dancing steps, which move with such quickness that he can skip onto a table or slide down the shafts of a cart and still arrive exactly on the Time-beat.

Hopkins does this with words. He clutches handfuls of them and squeezes them quickly into one gigantic word. Whole phrases are combined to form one large meaning—" Day-labouring-out," "All-down-darkness-wide," "Spend-thrift-salt," " Cast-by-conscience-out." By doing this he is compounding values to make greater, more powerful words, than our vocabulary contains. His energy crushes into the measure, more and more spilling corn! He is bursting the bag! Bursting the balloon! But does it matter what happens? He has caught the " absolute," of passionate, expression-desire and attained the instant where " full " passes to " over-full." So he has the right to lead us to the top of the hill over rough unused roads, where wheels are broken and harness snapped and the bruise-jostling-body-wakening ride stings us into mental action and exhilaration. When poetry-lovers learn to absorb poetry in slabs of words and take landscapes in a stride, Hopkins will be one of the most popular poets.

Yet we must also see the difficulties that his work presents and, by threshing them, find that they need not be obstacles any longer in the path of appreciation of this deep-thinking virile poet. For instance, almost always it is the meaning of his poems which builds up his grammatical structure. Not the structure that reveals the meaning. Like a futurist painter—" paleness " on his sky-line will probably represent the moon, but it might equally be the sun before a damp dawn! And it is only the sense of the poem that tells you it has got to be a moon.

Hopkins has no time, furthermore, for elaborations in indefinite or definite articles, relative pronouns and such appendages; and the reader is left guessing, until he foots the bill for himself. The colourless pedantry of these details were to him " time and space "-wasters.—For " I'm to be Queen of the May mother; I'm to be Queen of the May " you would find Hopkins writing,

> " Queen May! Mother!
> Spring-bursting-born! "

His need to impregnate his paper with the force of his thought, not its detailed explanation, was the thing he

sought, and for it, was prepared to do, or die in the attempt. If we want to find his dynamic living, we must seek the electric shocks, not search for academic structure—

"Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;
Not untwist—slack they may be—these last strands of man
In me or, most weary, cry 'I can no more.' I can;
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be."

It almost seems that he is tapping out vital thinking in morse code; living to the hilt of his life-span; not in the leisured past!

"Deutschland" is too long to quote, but "Windhover" is the gem that reflects Hopkins' alliteration; mass-wording; paeonic rhythms, sprung and outriding. In this poem the height-reaching poise of the falcon is the poet's own "mastery of the thing."

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Fal-
con, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and
striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the
hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of, the mastery of the
thing!
Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!
No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermillion.

### War Evenings with Books

And now for some successors of Hopkins. There is a poem in *Rhymed Ruminations* by Siegfried Sassoon (Faber, 5s.) which titles the ground work of the whole beautiful book—a small poem of great compass called Acceptance:

I have looked and understood how happiness recedes;
Not like the shore we leave at sunset; not by deeds
Of anger or indifference darkened into death,
But taken away by time,—O given back like breath."

These are the newer notes expressed from the older ivory keys of this later Sassoon, as opposed to the fierce thinker of twenty years ago, whom one loved none the less. Bits of the indignant whip still cut the air, as

> And we to-day's historian hints
> May all be Alfred's bombed to bits,

but the whip-crack is not so loud and the knots in the thongs are no longer tied. The stupid blundering of unthinking people and the needless cruelty that war inevitably brings are not less poignantly understood; indeed their perception is even clearer than in his last war poems of suppressed indignation and ice-cold observation. It is no shame to admit to unmistakable heartache as the poet touches the tragedy that has overtaken all creative impulse to-day. In his courage to face reality by acceptance there is also an infiltration of patient understanding that cannot be lightly passed over.

In the lovely lines of "November Dusk" is the same accompaniment of the changing changelessness of Time :—

> Ruminant, while firelight glows on shadowy walls
> And dusk with the last leaves of Autumn falls.

Twenty years ago Mr. Sassoon was a great poet but the leavening of those intervening years of silence has created an infinitely deeper gift of song :

> Beyond our monuments destroyed
> Beyond Utopia gained and lost
> And cheerful centuries well employed
> In paying what men's folly cost,—
> O face no more humane than this,
> O heart no less deceived than mine,
> O spirit brinked by death's abyss,
> O eyes which earth and cloud confine,—
> From your world order gazing back
> Learn, and forgive me what I lack.

*Death at Sea*, Frederick Prokosch (Chatto and Windus, 6s.) is at first perhaps a dispiriting title and yet walking so close to death the author is vividly alive; more conscious of imminent living, because of ever pressing death. Prokosch reminds us of Tagore in those poems where sound is

restricted almost to a monotone, flowing like a dark river :

Through the treacherous mask of the birches; the paler twilight
Has washed away the necessity for belief or disbelief
These soldiers do not hear, winding stealthily through the forest,
The savage and irresistible footfalls of their grief,

or in this sustained song,

Birds flow under the heavens,
And seas over their bed,
And the endless sea of history
Flows over the dead
While I wait in the useless city
For the voice of the one I love
For the head of the one I love
Beside my sleepless head.

Then without warning we come on a line like this which makes us sit up suddenly.—" The tidy little accountant planning the murder of his wife." What acute observation is here ! The lions, the scions, do not do these things. It is the insignificant, tidy people who plan the stark acts—the Adolphs and Benitos of this life.

Clutching a little case,
He walks out briskly to infect a city
Whose terrible future may have just arrived.

Auden was never more brilliant than when he found those simple words.

All ages suffer from the tongues
That gossip after they are dead.

Our Maginot line of road and pavement
Earth rent with bayonet-bladed grass :—

. . . drive keels,
Like ploughshares through green tides, to bring
Reluctant silver from the sea ;

The Trinity
An amateur's futile cabbalistic sign
That let the devil out.

These are the brilliant, penetrating observations, both beautiful, as well as arresting thought, found in *Tiresias* by P. N. Curry (Oxford University Press, 5s.). Mr. Curry reaches his best in " Song of the Hebrides," " Pelican,"

"Final Grief," and in his translation from that strained and most unhappy poet Arthur Rimbaud.

Does anyone ever read Edith Sitwell without hearing the distant strains of Dance Macabre? She is almost necromantic in style and yet so natural in *Poems Old and New* (Faber, 2s. 6d.), that one is lured into the midnight dance, however firmly one had determined not to be drawn. Such combinations as "Hearts and Ham bones," "Tall cranes," "Starved men (bags of wind)," "Trees hissing like green geese," and then

> Each cupboard's wooden skeleton
> Is a towel horse when the clock strikes one,

and again—

> The witches rag-rug takes its flight
> Beneath the willows watery light

Yes! It is most annoying but one is spellbound by witch-laughing humour, tragic truth and magic, unexpected, flashing words, like lightning in a coal-black sky:

> For everything comes to the shadows at last
> If the spinning-wheel Time move slow or fast,

We say like Harriet we will not play with the box of matches, but we know we will take just one, or even two perhaps, because we must read those words that fizz and sparkle in the dark.

E. M. STEPHENSON.

### THE CONTINUITY OF POETRY

Sir Edmund Chambers concludes his English Association presidential address on "The Timelessness of Poetry" (O.U.P., 2s.) by inquiring "How far is my doctrine of the continuity of poetry applicable to modern poetry? . . . If there has been a revolt against tradition, it has perhaps been more obvious in critical theories about poetry than in poetry itself. The theorists are well discussed in Sir Henry Newbolt's *A New Study of English Poetry* (1919), and again later in Mr. John Sparrow's *Sense and Poetry* (1934). Here are described a number of schools of 'new' poetry, which have arisen, largely in France and America, during the last half-century, and have produced manifestoes as to the lines on which they think that poetry ought to be written. Symbolists, Imagists, Futurists, Dadaists, Surrealists—they have followed each other in rapid succession. There is a good deal of the *blague* of the Paris studios about some of their utterances. But, taken

as a whole, they do imply an attempt to treat the poetry of tradition as a closed account. Romance is dubbed ' escapism '—not a very scholarly word-formation. ' We must have done,' say the Futurists, with ' the dead weight of the past,' with ' the obsession of antiquity and Classicism.' It ignores ' the complete renewal of human sensibility, which has taken place since the great scientific discoveries.' Life has now a quick rhythm. The poet's imagination must therefore be ' a wireless imagination,' an ' entire freedom of images and analogies, expressed by disjointed words and without the connecting wires of syntax.' And love-poetry is out of date. ' The lover, pure and simple, has lost his absolute prestige.' ' Love has lost its absolute value.' The Abbé Brémond again, a Symbolist, wanted a ' pure society,' obtaining its effects by suggestion alone, without the mediation of the intellect. It should be an experience akin to prayer, working through a mysterious quality residing in words—not in their sound, or rhythmical arrangement, still less in their intelligible content. We are far, you see, from the romantic Walter Pater's wise emphasis on the ' hard logical or quasi-prosaic excellence that verse has or needs.' Some echo of these exotic doctrines has drifted from overseas, and affected even English criticism, traditionally sane. A writer from one of our universities opines that a new technique is required, ' adequate to the ways of feeling, or modes of experience, of adult, sensitive moderns.' It must ' develop (if at all) along some other line than that running from the Romantics, through Tennyson, Swinburne, *A Shropshire Lad*, and Rupert Brooke.' And apparently it is to start from Mr. T. S. Eliot. . . . Frankly, I do not believe that poetry can be written in accordance with a scholastic theory, whether it is elaborated in Paris, or in Harvard, or in Cambridge. As Keats said, ' If Poetry comes not as naturally as leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all.' And although there have been some extravagances in modern English poetry, I do not believe that in bulk it is quite as bad as the spinners of theories would make it. There is ' incoherence,' but not ' complete unintelligibility.' I would add that even love and natural beauty are sometimes allowed to creep in. After all, men and women do still mate, although perhaps not so permanently as of old. Dawn still follows eve, and the flowers come, more or less, in their seasons. And the poets, however much they affect the manner of the wireless, cannot help being aware of these things. I am not much troubled by the fact that they are often obsessed with theories of social reorganisation. A poet's politics are perhaps the least important thing about him. The chief defect, I think, lies in an imperfect feeling for rhythm. Free verse is no novelty. Milton used it in its rhymed form, and Arnold in its unrhymed. But it requires a strong sense of rhythm to do without the incantation which a recurrent stanza-form brings."

Mr. R. C. Trevelyan has followed his Lucretius and other classical renderings with *Translations from Horace, Juvenal and Montaigne* (C.U.P.,

7s. 6d.), in which in ten-syllabled blank verse lines he gives a flowing felicitous version of "the pedestrian muse of Horace," on which his gentle ghost will smile not only indulgently but with gratification. The unperturbed short and corpulent Apulian farmer remains happy in his translators, the latest of whom admirably presents his true *aurea mediocritas*. Particularly modern because he is immortal in his Art of Poetry, he appears to be writing of to-day—

"Our own poets have left no style untried;
And no small glory did they earn when first
They dared forsake the footsteps of the Greeks . . .
Nor would our Latium be less renowned
For letters than for valour and martial deeds
Were it not that her poets, one and all,
Resent the toil and tedium of the file."

Although

"Democritus holds that native genius
Is more to be desired than pitiful art,
And shuts sane poets out of Helicon,"

the critic seizes the opportunity to perform

"The function of a whetstone, which can make
Steel sharp but has no power itself to cut.
Though I myself write nothing, I will teach
The business and the duties of a writer;
Show where his matter may be found; what nurtures
And moulds him into a poet; what beseems
And what beseems him not; whither a true
Knowledge will lead him, whither ignorance."

He proceeds to point out

"Poets desire either to benefit
Their readers or to charm them, or else both
To give delight and teach the art of life.
When you instruct be brief that so your thought
May readily grasp and faithfully retain
What's tersely said. Every superfluous word
Escapes from a mind that's too full to hold more.
Fiction meant to delight must keep as close
As may be to the truth. . . .
Not always will the arrow hit the mark
It aims at. But when a poem is adorned
With enough beauties, I should be the last
To take offence at a few trivial blots
Negligence has let fall, or human frailty
Has failed to avoid."

To-day's complaint is ventilated here:

"A man who knows nothing of sport will shun
The weapons of the Campus, and if unskilled

In ball or quoit or hoop will stand aside
Lest he become the unpitied laughing-stock
Of the dense ring. Yet he who knows not how
Dares to compose poetry. And why not?
Is he not free, of a free father born?"

And our own New Verse Critic might be pointing out

"An honest watchful critic will find fault
With languid verses and condemn the harsh;
Those that are graceless he will obelize
With a black pen-stroke; he will cut away
Pretentious ornament, urge you to throw light
On what lacks clarity, censure the phrase
That seems ambiguous, mark what should be changed,
Assume in fact the part of an Aristarchus.
He will not say 'Why take a friend to task
About mere trifles?' It is just such trifles
Will bring the poet into serious trouble,
If he be fooled and flattered insincerely."

*The Curlew Calls* (O.U.P., 5s.) is typical of Redwood Anderson's peculiar genius. He deals faithfully and with insight with places and scenes in Yorkshire—the moors, the plain, Humberside, Holderness, in characteristic irregular metres and broken rhythms. He is very ancient and very modern, without obscurity or involution, and is Horatian in his association of the common scene with enduring reality, combining remarkable sensitiveness with rare sensibility in his terse descriptions and his mastery of the arresting phrase—the plain "the voiceless average of time," the signpost "mute guardian of the public good," "the valley wept as with some settled pain," "the slow gossip of the river-tide," "the deep and paralytic cold of trance." One thing outside the poems irritates—Mr. Anderson dedicates the book "To Eileen"; that is according to custom, but when he overrules this dedication by inscribing or addressing to separate acquaintances individual poems that are offered to and intended for general use and approbation we feel aggrieved.

Mr. Reginald Blunt is satisfied to be called a "Mere Rhymster," and in his modest and almost timid Epilogue, *Random Rhymes* (The Richards Press) he says:

"But should you shake a dubious head, and say,
'I am not sure if this be poetry,'
I shall disarm you, answering (as I may)
'No more am I!'"

There is, indeed, something disarming in this book of *Random Rhymes*. Unaffected, wistful at times in a valiant endeavour to keep well abreast of an ever-changing world, and yet retaining throughout a warmth and good humour that gives a refreshing stimulus to our

much-abused senses, Mr. Blunt has succeeded in compiling a book of verse which will please many who are searching for intelligent relaxation in their war-time literature. More than this cannot be said about his book. The author will have achieved his object if these verses bring a chuckle, a tender thought, and even at times, a surreptitious sigh, to the many readers they deserve.

"Finis! Dear Critic, have you haply spied
Amidst its dross some trace of worthier ore?
If so, I am not merely satisfied;
No, I am more."

## CONCERT PIANIST

TIME cannot kill, but circumstance alone:
Fate but the path on which our feet are set.

Dweller in houses vanished long ago
You lean sharp-pointed as a mountain ash
Clinging to shifting rocks in scytheless grass,
And from the mineral veins of dead musicians
You strive to fill an aching void, stiffen a faltering will.
Around stir nameless phantoms, slow and sad,
On paths that led to water once
But now are overgrown.
Shaken the senses, yet the heart is judge.

The splendour of the ash is faded
As delicate satin beneath the harshness of soda,
The wild dawn-glory has leaked away
In eternal restless questions
That melt the bones—but not with pity—
Leaving but dust: barren philosophies
Blown by a streak-thin wind.
See, where the impulse of happiness wings up
Only to fall swift-shot by the arrows of thought.
Past hours crowd thick, staring with hungry eyes. . .

For you no tender sky will ever melt in prayer,
That scarlet fruit you bear
Is tasteless on the tongue.
The simple and the lovely things
Grow twisted, poisoned by a subtle bane:
The strangeness in your sight
Cannot be rubbed away.

An epitaph? The world has writ it thus:
Despite your fame, no moss will ever mar your name. . . .

MARGUERITE EDGELOW.

# DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: LXXXVIII

*Midstream* (Kaleidograph Press, Texas) is the fourth volume of Mrs. Margaret E. Bruner's poetry. Indiana, her native State, is justly proud of her. She has contributed to hundreds of American and English periodicals and her poems have found their way into numerous anthologies. She is also known as a writer of book reviews and is active in the literary and cultural clubs in her city, New Castle.

Mrs. Bruner sends us the following paragraph:

> " The true poet, to me, is one who wishes to create something as nearly perfect as possible—something beautiful and lasting. He does not primarily wish to uplift the universe, or, in other words, to be merely didactic, as every work of art, well constructed and sincere, is uplifting in itself. If he can have such an influence without making it too obvious, well and good; but it is better, it seems to me, to present an idea so that the reader may do his own thinking, for the purpose of all good writing is to make the reader think."

Turning interestedly the pages we read a tribute to Jane Addams, whom she refers to as " The Great Mother "—

> Mothers there are who love their own by birth,
> Yet pay scant heed to others in distress,
> But she was moved by all who knew the dearth
> Incurred by poverty—her kindliness
> And vision sought to find the cause that lay
> Behind the wrong; if blame instead of praise
> She often met, her steadfast, inner gaze
> Sustained and gave her fortitude to say
> The truths that helped to make a better day.

Amelia Earhart has been the inspiration for numbers of poems. The following stands well among them:

> Lament not that her time on earth was brief,
> But rather magnify her spirit's keen
> Enthusiasm—there can be no grief
> For one so valiant; thus her life should mean
> A quickening power for the ones who plod—
> A force to spur the tired, discouraged mind
> To new endeavour—an invisible rod
> Of strength for travellers who have lagged behind.
>
> So we must never think of her as dead,
> But joyous and alive with eager face;
> Seeking new truths, some goal that lies ahead,
> Whose bright, brave spirit glories in the race,
> With faith and courage radiant as the dawn,
> Who still is ever flying, on and on.

In *Plumes from a Wild Bird's Wing*, by Mildred Putnam Henry (Wings Press), we find much to like.

Mrs. Henry sends us from her home, Riverside, California, the following word about poetry :

> " Gold is not for the poet. His share must fall to the beauty-seeker. Yet poets must create, and will not be denied. Elusive thoughts, like butterflies, besiege his soul, and a poem is born, leaving in the place of unrest a sense of supreme satisfaction. This is the poet's compensation."

" Fools May Dream of Pleasure " follows :

The shoes I wear are soled with lead—
I prayed for silver sandals ;
I asked for wine . . . you gave me bread,
And roving gypsy vandals
Have stolen all the wealth I hid
Beneath a gilded altar
With secret lock and secret lid.
I know my feet will falter
Before I reach the empty shrine
To look for gold no longer mine . . .

The metal soles have bruised my feet—
I have not found the treasure ;
Pray give me bread that I may eat,
And fools may dream of pleasure.

*Mountain, Valley, Lake and Stream*, by Anna Elizabeth Phelps (Poet's Press, Rockefeller Centre, N.Y.), contain a number of interesting etchings by Anthony Thieme, Harry L. Peckmore, and Paul F. Bardanier, Sr., and a hearty response to the delights of nature is found in the graphic poems.

Let us meet Mrs. Florence Bowen Hult (*Shadows on the Wall* (Bruce Humphries Co., Boston) ) through the paragraph she sends us, containing lively thought in unusual words :

> " Why escape a seething workaday world to wield a recording pen ? To see colour unfold into form from clayey facts and find embedded gestant seeds of meaning. To quicken with the pulsing relations of a fluid universe where stubborn solids mingle and dissolve—unmaking and remaking.
>
> " Autumnal shrubbery on a hillside seems not important ; the poignant ephemerality of beauty is ; also the transience of time."

" The Way of Quietness " follows :

Carry me loosely in your hands,
O high-powered life.
I shall grow beautiful
As low undented hills,
The barless prairie lands,

Or gentle autumn sun ;
As swelling tide of twilight
Blending yesterday
With all to-morrow.
Life, delicately press ;
Carry me loosely in your hands.

Characteristic of this poet's genius is " Cycle of Flame " :

With strong compelling breath
I lift the powdery ash
Of slow on-creeping death
From crumbled embers.

With stress of eager breath
I make an urgent lash
To rouse life-shards from death
In glow charred coal remembers.

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

Professor V. de S. Pinto of University College, Southampton, has expressed the opinion that the poetry of Robert Bridges moved in rather too rarefied an atmosphere. " It tends to be poetry for the connoisseur. It lacks the salt and savour of common humanity." Bridges would be reckoned as the last great poet of the English aristocratic tradition—the inheritor of the delicate art of Spenser, Campion and the younger Milton. " His work," Professor Pinto said, " will remain a place of refreshment and spiritual delight for sensitive and cultivated minds, and his experiments will always interest technicians in verse. The man himself was greater than his poetry." Recognition came to Bridges late in life, but when it came it was almost universal, at any rate, among the best writers. But Bridges could never have aspired to become a poet appealing to the masses.

Professor Pinto recalls visiting Bridges some years before his death. " He was a very tall, spare old man with a white beard, dark eyebrows and very blue eyes. He lived in a beautiful house which he had built for himself on Boar's Hill, near Oxford. It was a house full of magnificent books and valuable music, for Bridges was a musician as well as a poet, and it had a wonderful garden. In the garden was a rockery which he called his suntrap. There is a poem which he wrote in that rockery in his old age—a poem which I think gives us the truest impression of this poet. It painted a picture of an old man reading the Odyssey in the sun among the flowers, and, forgetting his books, falling to fancies about the flowers and the making of delicate little verses. The gods were very good to Robert Bridges, but they omitted to give him the gifts which are, perhaps, necessary for the greatest poetry—the gift of suffering and the gift of passion."

## BRITAIN AND THE DEFENCE OF POETS

(*To the Editor of* THE POETRY REVIEW)

SIR,—I read with interest Mr. Vandemere Fleming's letter entitled " Poets and the Defence of Britain " and I am glad to have the opportunity of crossing swords with such an antagonist, but it is clear that he and I are never likely to agree. I look upon Auden as one of the most important poets now living, he does not ; I believe that Auden is right to remain in America, he does not ; I believe that the individual should be free to choose for himself whatever cause of action he pursues, but Mr. Fleming would have everyone fighting for those things which he—Mr. Fleming—holds dear, irrespective of whether they too hold Mr. Fleming's beliefs, irrespective of whether they are likely to be of much value fighting for them even if they did, irrespective of the work which they might be carrying out if they stayed calmly doing their own jobs, as in Auden's case writing poetry.

But there are several issues I should like to raise with Mr. Fleming. Why for instance does he speak of " Dunkirk " with reverent pride ? Dunkirk represents two things. First, it represents the culmination of a year's constant defeat in the field, symbolizing as it does that episode in which our armies were—I hope not finally—pushed off the shores of Europe. Second, it stands for a glorious, an economical, and a remarkable escape. Mr. Fleming—like so many others—tends to forget the military catastrophe because of the glory attached to it. But I am a realist ; I do not speak of Dunkirk with reverent pride but prefer to forget about it. I am an advocate for efficiency and success and do not believe in fighting wars as if they were games. As Mr. Fleming himself points out, there is too much at stake. And if it is the escape that Mr. Fleming celebrates, why the sneers at Auden ?

Again it is difficult to see what Mr. Fleming is getting at when he talks of courts to decide which skins should be preserved. Since Auden's position is assured the question does not arise. With regard to others, it is surely a question of whether or not the poets believe in what their countries are fighting for. Aeschylus felt it his duty to fight, so did Brooke, Grenfell and Thomas. As to Coleridge I do not think that anything can be drawn from a case so frivolous—I wonder how pleased the sergeant was when he found " Simon Cumberbatch " diverting his fellow troopers from their work by " talking metaphysics at them in the stable ! " But Mr. Fleming's mention of Shakespeare is, I think, a point in my favour. Supposing the strolling player *had* been taken by a press gang and forced to serve on one of Drake's ships against the Armada, would one more death from scurvy have made up to us for the loss of so many plays ?

As to the " greatness " of Auden, it is significant that the last four on Mr. Fleming's list of " great poets "—Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley—also had to contend with that kind of opposition which Auden has been receiving from these who do not perhaps entirely understand him. Indeed, I think that if Mr. Fleming were to

take *The Quarterly Review's* " article on " Endymion," substitute the name of Auden for that of Keats and substitute Auden quotations for those from " Endymion," he would find the parallel almost exact. As to the line " To-morrow for the young the poets exploding like bombs," this has always seemed to me a very vivid way of describing poets writing new poems for a new generation. To look at it in any other way seems to me as odd as expecting to find Santa Claus a leading character in *A Winter's Tale*. But no doubt Mr. Fleming wishes that poets were physically capable of exploding like bombs, in order perhaps that they might be dropped over Berlin by the R.A.F.! *The Quarterly Review* thought many lines by Wordsworth funny (even Byron wrote of " The Idiot Boy."

" To see the Idiot in all his glory
You'd think the Bard the hero of the story ")

and considered a great deal of Keats so much " crackling of thorns under a pot."

However to get back to the real subject. If Mr. Fleming were to read that strangely unsatisfying play *Over the Frontier*, he would find Auden's position fairly clearly stated. Auden does not return to this country obviously because he is not a patriot and does not believe in a patriotic war. To Auden English " democracy " represents one kind of badness just as fascism represents another. When it becomes a real war for the brotherhood of mankind, at any rate for the people—and Auden has leanings towards Communism—then Auden will perhaps be among us. At the moment he is fighting the people's war best by writing in America.

Finally I have often been asked why—if I support Auden—I am not in America myself. The fact is that I am prepared to be purely destructive. Fascism represents a way of life which I will oppose, irrespective of what I am putting in its place or of what in order to oppose it I am supporting. Under a fascist régime there is—as Mr. Fleming points out—no place for the free individual. It is a machine-made world that I am fighting against, a world in which men are as ants, in which the thoughtful, the beautiful, the gay and the bold are for ever among the defeated.

Further implications of the problem I have dealt with in an article " Hell is where one starts from," which is due to appear in the next number of *Kingdom Come*. There I say : ' The writer or artist who has found himself, who knows what he is and where his destiny lies, is right to eschew the army, to flee if necessary to a safe haven, in order to continue that work which is likely to be of more permanence than the results of wars and to give more joy to humanity than the fall of bombs, which is therefore more important than the mere waging of war, for whatever cause. On the other hand those whose selfhood is not yet certain or whose integrity as individuals is unsound should face and take part in war as a means of strength." Auden, it will be

remembered, has been an ambulance driver in Spain and a reporter in China.

Also in the new *Kingdom Come* (No. 6) will appear a poem " The Foundations " by Clifford Dyment, the last verse of which I should like to commend to Mr. Vandemere Fleming—as well as to Sir Patrick Ford, who I understand has withdrawn his subscription to THE POETRY REVIEW on account of my same article " Love and War."

" Scorn not the warners, who, with books and songs,
Fled from the building, knowing it would fall.
They did not desert their comrades : derision
Was all their payment for *take care !* Their arts
They loved and would save, so off they went, truly
In the haunt of winds and curlews to build.

JOHN WALLER.

P.S.—As to the postcard vote—to send a postcard costs only twopence. I think that Mr. Fleming will find that more people have paid real money to read books of poems by Auden than have paid to read poetry by any other serious poet of the same generation. But I am glad he likes Macneice.

## COMMERCIAL POETRY

(*To the Editor of* THE POETRY REVIEW)

SIR,—Many fine appreciative things have been written about Poetry in these pages and words of gratitude to individual poets are not unknown.

May I say a word for poor poets—I mean poets who have no worldly wealth : It is as hard for a poor poet to live spaciously in the kingdom of Poetry as it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Wealthy men have been poets—but not because they were wealthy. Poor men have been poets ; most poets have been poor men ; and often because their very real gifts shut them out of the general scramble for a sufficient wage. The world at large, which values all things in terms of money, cannot bring itself to believe in the validity of gifts which produce no monetary return. Poetic fire has to be its own reward.

I suggest that thoughtful men and women who have the interests of Poets and Poetry at heart should consider now what can be done to help this great Art and its many suffering servants. They, the poets, need, for instance, a reference book on the lines of the sketchy list of periodicals which print verse in *The Writers' and Artists' Year Book.* They need the names and addresses of all the periodicals which *pay* for accepted work. They need a full knowledge of every possible means of bringing their work to market, chiefly for the works' sake and incidentally that they, the poets, may live.

Even a poet needs business ability and he ought to develop the same, at least so far as business ability can further the prosperity of his

work. It seems to me, however, that it would be difficult for him to get to know all he should know about the business side of his own high business. Surely the Poetry reviews and magazines should, with all lovers and patrons of Poetry, help the poor poet to the utmost, that he may be freed for the full exercise of his calling.

Not only is it too readily assumed that a poet should be poor, that he should live in a garret, that he must be (I speak as a worldling) a failure; it is assumed—this is the astonishing fact—that a poet loves his garret, worships the Lady Poverty, and is proud of financial failure.

The avenues of inquiring thought I have indicated should, surely, be fully explored. Who will help?

The world needs Poetry to-day as it never needed it before. The way to supply that need is, first, to help all poets.

Richmond, November 23rd. Yours faithfully,

AIDAN CLARKE.

[This is scarcely the time for re-opening an old grievance. Whatever small market there was for new verse is further limited by present circumstances, and it is almost idle to discuss the economic question. The papers and periodicals that can use and pay for poetry are either dying or have too little space. A few use new verse as a concession to the graces, the majority despise it as they consider it has no commercial value. The "poetry magazines" are hopeless and helpless; if they exist at all they get nowhere and struggle along on charity. Even THE POETRY REVIEW, with its universal circulation and influence, is not a commercial proposition; it is carried by The Poetry Society; it cannot extend its popular sale by fiction and news which are the backbone of the magazine and newspaper and enable those publications to command advertisements, out of which some small amount of the accrued surplus could be devoted to the payment of verse contributors. No periodical makes a profit from any of the verse it may publish, unless it is by a Kipling. There is another aspect of this vexed but simple question but it cannot be discussed at present. On the one practical point raised by Mr. Clarke, we have found (and recommended) the W.A.Y.B.'s list as providing the most complete and well-informed guide to the publication of verse that can be compiled. What it cannot tell is what the demand of any particular paper is at any particular time or how far with all of them the supply exceeds the demand. We have tried to induce newspapers to make a feature of verse and offered to supply poems of good quality in place of the trite doggerel that is allowed to creep in too often when verse is published. But we have been told invariably "No space," when the reply has not been in the aloof words of Queen Victoria, "we are not interested." We have found occasional openings but they have never been permanent. *The Windsor Magazine*, almost alone in taking a variety of bright individual work, has suspended publication. One Sunday paper asked us to recommend a laureate who could commemorate in

verse an outstanding event of the week. This indicates the most direct, effective possibility of associating poetry with the daily and weekly press, but the writers must follow it up themselves. Agents can be of little practical service to them.—Ed.]

### Another Criticism of Mr. Waller

(*To the Editor of* The Poetry Review)

Sir,—May I crave space in your much restricted Review to voice a brief but none the less emphatic protest concerning Mr. Waller's article in the Nov.-Dec. issue?

I submit that what Mr. Eliot has brought forth after much labour and mental strife (his latest work "East Coker" puts one in mind of the mouse and the mountain, for it is extremely brief, yet clearly the result of much desperate thinking), the Rev. R. G. Davies is saying so much more simply and no less succinctly in his series of radio talks. But even if we allow that Eliot is a sound philosopher (which I, for one, am not prepared to concede), why should he trouble to carve up his unlyrical sentences in order to give them a superficial semblance of verse, thereby only serving to obscure their meaning further? It is time the Eliot ramp was exposed.

As for Miss Marie Stopes, whom Mr. Waller oddly couples with Mr. Eliot for the purposes of his article: do her neo-romantic effusions really deserve more than passing mention? To thrust "greatness" upon her as does your contributor, is enough to make even the exuberant recipient of such sycophantic excesses feel embarrassed, and it is at the same time a reflection upon the critical faculties of one at least of our younger poets.

Yours faithfully,

B.B.C. Club, 29.11.40. E. Curt Peters.

### "Beauty Vanishes, Beauty Passes"

(*To the Editor of* The Poetry Review)

Sir,—The purpose of my article was not quite understood. I was not stating my own views, but trying to suggest some of the different ideas which poets have expressed on this theme—ranging from a sense of the complete evanescence of beauty, to a belief in beauty's immortality which came to at least one poet through his faith in God.

But apart from this, how many poets have had rigid ideas on the matter? Poetry, as Thomas Hardy wrote in one of his letters, "is concerned with impressions, not convictions," and impressions change with mood and circumstance. At one time a poet may feel the utter hopelessness of passing things; at another he may feel that beauty is essentially indestructible. Omar Khayyám, who was quoted first in my article, may have had moments of faith; Manley Hopkins, the last quoted, most certainly had moments of complete despair. Between these two extremes are a whole range of impressions which

may come to the same poet at different times. Shakespeare touched all these points; even his sonnets are contradictory if one is reading them in the hope of finding a consistent attitude to beauty. A poet is a poet. He is not necessarily a philosopher.

Yours sincerely,

November 14th, 1940. CLIVE SANSOM.

HARRY SEFTON, Lytham, re-acting to "Love and War, 1940," sends TO AUDEN—IN AMERICA:

Is then your muse the precious gem
That to the girdle and the hem
Of Poesy's gown adds radiancy,
To scintillate in brilliancy?

Then priceless must your music be,
Eternal fame the only fee
To compensate desertion's shame
Now Britain knows consuming flame.

Why flee the epoch of the night?
Is liberty to die sans fight?
And love alone inspire the white
And feathered plume? Courage incite
With saga of a London brave,
Wrath mounting high beneath the wave
Of Death's destructive meteors,
Falling from skies like shooting stars.

Cries not spill'd blood to blood of thine?
Hear'st thou no call—breast heartless thine?
May burning homes thy soul ignite
With freedom's fire undying light.

The HON. JOAN BEVAN writes MATHEMATICIAN:

If He notes when an unseen sparrow falls
And counts the hairs on each unworthy head,
And hears a sick and sorry world that calls
Aloud for peace and for man's daily bread;
Is He too god-like and too far apart
To mark the soldier die, the airman fall,
The sailor, all those in life's busy mart
Where mankind's liberty is all in all;
To mark the sacrifice in many wars
On land, in air, out to the farthest sea
While adding up the total world wide scores
Making them form a pattern endlessly?

Not so. He reckons those multi sores
That scar the stricken souls of all that be.

ELIZABETH BARRETT describes THE ORCHARD IN AUGUST:

Now does the orchard live its own sweet life.
The laden boughs are bending, and caress
The long grass in its fragrant lusciousness
Unhindered by the scythe and pruning knife,
And weeds and nettles without shame are rife.
Silence is broken as an apple falls,
Or some wild creature to its offspring calls,
Not to be heard is any sound of strife;
And in the quiet dusk these gnarled old trees
Whisper to one another of the past,
Like warriors who bravely fought the blast
Of cruel winds, and frosts that seemed to freeze
Their life blood. Now in its security
The orchard smiles with true complaisancy.

Fred G. Webb (Croydon) addresses a spirited poem to THE LION FRONT:

Great-hearted Britain! friend of serf and thrall;
Custodian of the honour of the world;
A Beacon Light, in sapphire seas impearled,
That quickens Hope, when cloud and darkness fall;
The vile oppressors gather like a wall
Of fire and flame; the thunderbolts are hurled;
And night and day, with Freedom's flag unfurled,
You face the shattering bomb, the shell and ball.

But forward, Britain! keep the lion front
That oft of old dismayed opposing arms;
That never feared, nor fled, the battle's brunt.
No craven you, to shudder at alarms.
Your splendid history, your high renown
Spell death to Tyranny. Come, strike it down!

*Strange Roads* by Rose L. Firth, one of the Manitoban members of THE POETRY SOCIETY, is a privately produced pamphlet of delicate sensitive verse that has met with a gratifying public reception in Vancouver. The poems show no particular originality but they appeal through their common humanity, their sincerity and sensitiveness where many more ambitious literary efforts fail.

Certain mails from the United States and Canada having been lost at sea in October and November, correspondents who have not received acknowledgment of letters posted during this period are asked to repeat their communications.

*THE POETS' FELLOWSHIP :*

## THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

Our contributors may be roughly divided into those who write of the war, and those who, in the poems sent to us, continue to live in the inner world of poetry. In her lyric, " You swallows and you migratory birds," BRENDA SKENE has beautifully combined the two worlds. This author has also contributed a very lovely lyric " Evensong " in meditative vein.

High praise must go to ELLODE COLLINS (Bournemouth) for work of exquisite accomplishment displayed in four poems and to D. E. CHRISTINE TOMLIN (Dunstable) for two short lyrics inspired by the recent memorable summer. Our awards go to these three contributors.

HIGHLY COMMENDED :

Rachel E. Boulton, Bath ;
N. K. Cruickshank, Liverpool ;
Marguerite Edgelow, Maidstone ;
I. Sutherland Groom, Sedbergh ;
Christine L. Henderson, Montreal;
F. Jennings, Porlock ;
P. E. Leaver, Ambleside ;
Redcliffe McKie, Brighton ;
Cynthia Palmer, York ;
E. Curt Peters, Evesham ;
P. E. Procter, Taplow ;
Frances Pritchard, Bournemouth ;
Margery Smith, Nottingham ;
Muriel Symmons, Salcombe ;
Gertrude Vallance, Cape Town ;

COMMENDED :

Walter Burton, Burton-on-Trent ;
T. E. Casson, Ulverston ;
E. B. W. Chappelow, Egham ;
F.C., Kingston Hill, S.W. ;
O. C. Dougan, London, N. ;
R. G. Duff, Teignmouth ;
Constance Farmar, Farnham ;
Gladys Hunkin, St. Ives ;
Pauline Huthwaite, Grantham ;
W. R. Latham, Chingford ;
Irene H. Lewis, Dorking ;
C. A. R. MacDougall, Bedford ;
G. E. B. McWilliam, London, N.;
C. Morton, Beaufort, Mon.;
Margaret Ormiston, Cheltenham ;
Irene Ormsby, Thurgoland ;
Phoebe Rayner, Rivington ;
Harry Sefton, Lytham ;
Roberta Shuttleworth, Guildford ;
Bertha M. Skeat, Sedbergh ;
Hilda M. Slade, Worthing ;
Arthur Lynnford-Smith, Wanstead ;
Ruth Tenney, Streatley ;
Phyllis Dulce Warwick, Newark ;
Charles Woodhouse, Haslemere.

The usual premium offer for the best poem or poems submitted to the Premium Editor during the month (without limitation of subject) is continued. Not more than four lyrics or one long poem should be submitted. MSS. should reach " The Premium Editor, THE POETRY REVIEW, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," by February 1st, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope, and if criticism is desired, 2s. 6d. (For a more detailed postal criticism, 5s. should be sent.) It is

essential that entrants to this competition be members of The Poetry Society or registered subscribers to THE POETRY REVIEW, and that each poem bears the name and address of the author.

ROBERT ANDREW (Hoylake) sends a short HYMN FOR AIRMEN:

Omniscient Spirit, 'neath Thy care,
Take Thou our airmen everywhere.
May all who sail the uncharted sky,
And view Thy wonder from on high,
Upheld by Thy serenity,
Praise Thee through all Eternity.

G. E. MULLINS sees RAINBOW'S END:

There is always Manoa of the golden dome.
There is always Jerusalem.
There is Mecca to guide the soul;
And the lure of the Fortunate Isles:—
Orchards of the Hesperides
Where the Sun dips low in the gold
Beyond the Pillars of Hercules.

Hope is o'er the horizon yet.
Perhaps she dwells in Ultima Thule,
Or where isles of the Western Sea
Slip into the sunset.

E. VANDERMERE FLEMING provides COMFORT FOR THE HIGH-BROW-BEATEN:

When you are ordered to admire
As latest flame of Heavenly fire
Poems to you quite meaningless
But full of uncouth ugliness
Or even crude obscenity,
And you confess you cannot see
The faintest trace of poetry,
You know the stare, the haughty sneer,
You are familiar with the taunt
"It's your misfortune that you can't;
You lack the eye, the flair, I fear."
(It happens about pictures, too,
When you attend a Private View).

Now if you on this thought reflect
You'll heal your wounded self-respect.

The canine senses far surpass
The human, and them quite out-class,

Except, indeed, the sense of taste ;
The dog gulps down in careless haste.
But as for sight and hearing, well,
And most of all, the sense of smell !

How often you a dog will see
Ecstatic to the last degree
Gloating and nosing, rolling on,
What seems to dull humanity
A mass of putrid carrion.

Has Heaven to the dog revealed,
(And those whose scornful arrogance
Derides our earth-bound ignorance),
Diviner scents from us concealed ?
May what to us seems hideousness
Contain new gifts of loveliness ?

The noses of our ancestors
Were much more tolerant than ours.
They could indifferently endure
The filthy odours of the sewer,
But never, like this " modern " set,
Professed to find in it the lure
Of fragrant rose and violet.

Well, at the risk of ridicule,
And being called " a (something) fool,"
By those who love such smells, I think
I'll dare to call a stink—a stink.

PORTMAN SQUARE : Verses anent The Poetry Society in Wartime by MARY STELLA LING, a 15-years-old member :

Shattered the window pane,
Pouring the autumn rain,
Flooded the desk again !
Onward, work on !

Choking the winter fog,
Deaf'ning the bombs that jog,
Where is the Yule-tide log?
Onward, work on !

Bitter the rising gale,
Pelting the icy hail,
Lower the warplanes sail,
Nearer the bombs,
Swiftly they fall anew!

Steadfast you valiant few,
Quicker the work pursue.
The planes are gone.

Bright shines the sun again.
And there it does remain
As in a country lane.
Onward, work on!

Onward to grander things,
Things that the future brings,
Things that the poet sings.
Onward, work on!

To you will come the praise,
To you the laurels raise,
Who made your words always
Onward, work on!

Evelyn Ryan Hyde (San Francisco) sends Missive Courageous, written to express the inspiration and emotion felt on receiving, as usual, the September-October issue of The Poetry Review:

Small wonder that the wells of tears were stirred
And that the heart stepped up its common beat, . . .
Touching the pages which so lately heard
The scream of bombs and felt the battles heat,
That saw destruction blow on blow, replete
With sorrow. Yet so strong with undimmed hope
Are Britons and none thinks the word, "defeat."
Each knows there is no ill he can not cope
And that, through blackest night, Freedom at last will grope!

Joyce T. Rowe (Highgate) asks "Do you Remember Nicholas Rowe?"

We hear a great deal nowadays about the March of Time and its cause and, occasionally, logical effect. But if time can exalt a memory so can it dim the most genuine lustre, and while some of our poets are often remembered for that which should most condemn them, there are others of acknowledged merit almost submerged in the indiscriminating dust,—which brings me simultaneously to my point and to Nicholas Rowe, for he is of the latter order and a worthy and hard-working member, too.

Nicholas Rowe was born in 1673 of an old and sturdy family, well rooted in their Devonshire estate. His father had been the first to strike out on his own, and at an early age Nicholas was sent to a private school at Highgate, the first step towards following his father's profession. Later, it appears he coped at the Middle Temple with the intricacies of the law with the same concise ease which characterized

his literary activities. He proved to be an excellent linguist and his translations from the classics may be said to have outshone his own sometimes too graceful compositions. Perhaps his greatest contribution to literature was his translation of Lucan's " Pharsalia," a vigorous and flowing piece of work,—almost too flowing, perhaps—at least to my inexpert eyes !

In 1700 he wrote his first play, *The Ambitious Stepmother*, which was produced at Lincoln's Inn Theatre. It must have been favourably received because it was at this time that Rowe finally decided to devote himself entirely to writing. The only comment I can find on it, however, is a masterpiece of under-statement by the prompter, who said that " it was very well acted and answered the company's expectations."

Altogether, he wrote about eight plays, and the easy elegance of his style, coupled with the fact that virtue was always rewarded handsomely and his villains (unbelievably black-hearted ones !) always defeated, ensured them a good reception. He was, however, possessed of a bubbling wit which alternately delighted and infuriated his companions, and, while he had made his name as a serious writer, in 1704 he tried his hand at a comedy, *The Biter*, and here, alas, we have a minor tragedy. For *The Biter* was the most deplorable flop, and in all London there was no one who thought it even remotely funny save only the indefatigable author who sat, night after night, in the half-empty theatre, laughing heartily at his own jokes. " But," Dr. Johnson wrote, later, " finding that he and the public had no sympathy of mirth, he tried at lighter scenes no more."

He had a very real and glowing admiration for Shakespeare and his work shows evidence of this influence. There is an Elizabethan glint in the lines on that never-failing source of inspiration, woman :

> And one false step entirely damns her fame,
> In vain with tears the loss she may deplore,
> In vain look back on what she was before :
> She sets like stars that fall, to rise no more.

And on superstition :

> Midnight hags,
> By force of potent spells, of bloody characters,
> And conjurations horrible to hear,
> Call fiends and spectres from the yawning deep
> And set the ministers of hell at work.

In 1709 he compiled an edition of Shakespeare's works which yielded fruitful references to which many present-day editions refer, and in his " Pharsalia " he gives a pithy description of Cleopatra which shows some resemblance to the Master Pen :

> Her robe, her every part, her air confess
> The power of female skill exhausted in her dress.
> Fantastic madness of unthinking pride
> To boast that wealth which prudence strives to hide.

But despite his literary activities, he contrived to be an excellent business man as well. He was Under-Secretary to Lord Queensbury, and at the close of the reign of Anne, that inevitable Queen, he held several high positions. He was made Poet-Laureate in 1715, but did not wear his laurels long, for he died three years later at the age of forty-five and was buried in the Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, under a handsome epitaph composed by his friend, Pope.

With regard to his work, while it seldom moves the reader to any great degree, it has a purity of form and a good command of words which, even in these days of obscure dynamics, is not to be despised. Some of it, of course, bears the elegant stamp of the period :

To the brook and the willow that heard him complain . . .
Ah willow, willow,
Poor Colin sat weeping and told them his pain ;
Ah willow, willow ! Ah willow, willow.

But he can strike a deeper note.

Death is the privilege of human nature
And life without it were not worth our taking.
Thither the poor, the pris'ner and the mourner
Fly for relief, and lay their burthens down.

And this last, striking a bitterly topical note :

War, the needy bankrupt's last resort.

At any rate, it can at least be said of Nicholas Rowe that he is remembered in spite of his laureateship, rather than because of it.

Sir Arnold Wilson was an active, sympathetic vice-president of The Poetry Society, in fact, an incarnation of the Society—virile, eager, imbued with all the best and most permanent in poetry. His astounding memory, unequalled by Macaulay's, strengthened rather than obscured his strong personality. He was proud of the arresting power in Parliament and elsewhere of a quotation from Milton or the Psalms, or a Greek or Latin poet (in the original) introduced into a forcible speech. He was a wonderful talker, too, to whom the epitaph of Heraclius could be applied. Only a few days before his disappearance Sir Arnold sent for The Poetry Society's library, some volumes of typical mid-Victorian poetry and a framed portrait of T. E. Browne, his father's colleague at Clifton, to whose memory he was devoted, eager to speak about him and read his Manx poems. We published not long ago a report of his characteristic activities in connection with the T. E. Browne Memorial he was instrumental in raising in the Isle of Man, whither he went by steerage, reading Browne to his fellow passengers and overlooked on landing by the distinguished reception committee who looked for a differently-dressed passenger in a different part of the boat.

Even in youth recognition in poetry comes tardily. We are informed (not officially) that Mr. Michael Thwaites is to be the next

recipient of the Royal Medal for Poetry—presumably the 1939 award—for his 1938 Newdigate poem which he, in a fine frenzy, " knocked off in a fortnight," or less than one-sixth of the time allowed for the lucubration of the efforts put forward in this distinguished but much deprecated competition. We do not remember anything of the 1938 report but apparently the standard was exceptionally high, although we have not come across Mr. Thwaites since. Has Mr. John Waller overlooked him ? But the Newdigate judges will be flattered by other eminent adjudicators having not only accepted their award but placed this poem—it can hardly be called a volume—above all the other first and second volumes of poems published in 1938 and (presumably) 1939. Had Mr. Christopher Hassell and Mr. T. Weston Ramsey and a score of other comparatively new-comers already been too productive ?

Mildred Valley Thornton in the *Vancouver Sun*: I have before me the October, 1940, issue of The Poetry Review of London, England, the leading poetry magazine of the world. As usual, on the cover there are the pregnant words, " Where there is no vision the people perish," and inside there is the customary announcement that " Auditions in diction and verse speaking which have been carried on continuously and effectively for thirty years, will be continued as required and as circumstances will allow as a national work, and as an essential contribution to cultural development."

As a national work, mark you. With bombs screaming, guns roaring, blood flowing and civilization crashing to its fall, poetry is to be carried on in England as a national work.

We have special reason to be grateful for the poets of this time. They are those who can look back over the tesselated mosaic of the past, survey with calm dispassion the social and mental convulsions of the present, and gaze out to the future with that confidence and quietness which is born of an awareness of ultimate values.

All thinking people know that the struggle now going on is not primarily a war between nations. It is a conflict of ideals, the climax of ages of the good and evil impulses of humanity. Many believe that we are on this planet for one purpose only—to grow spiritually. Poetry is the best human channel for the voice of spirit. It is the language of the soul ; moreover, it is the language of great souls. A sober trust is betrayed if it is not so regarded. . . . The Vancouver Poetry Writers, whose members are all writing poetry, is affiliated with The Poetry Society as are many groups in the United States.

Since its inception fifteen years ago, Mrs. Irene Moody, the author of several books of poetry, has been its capable and tireless leader. The members meet bi-monthly to read, discuss and constructively criticise each other's work, and a number have emerged from the sky, budding novice stage into full-fledged poets under this wise and kindly guidance. The group has also an ever-widening circle of

absentee members who send in their work for advice and criticism. It has been said that there are more poets to the square inch of British Columbia than in any other province, so it is fitting that people should know of those in our midst who are holding this light aloft while they continue to knit socks betimes and do other war work.

We deeply regret to have to record the death of Mrs. Annie C. Braund, of Bideford, who for many years has been the organising secretary of the North Devon examinations in diction and verse speaking. Mrs. Braund, with her innate gifts and tempered enthusiasm, was a remarkably successful and practical organiser. She promoted and managed three large historic pageants in Bideford, in which from two hundred to a thousand performers took part. With The Poetry Society's work she was similarly successful and indefatigable and loyal, the festival three years ago, attended by Viscountess Buckmaster, Mr. Marshall, Mr. T. Weston Ramsey, and the Director, being a demonstration of her effectiveness, the high intelligence and capacity of the candidates taking the examinations and the great esteem in which she was held. Mrs. Braund's concern for verse extended to the writing as well as the speaking of it: she had distinguished literary skill and taste, supplying the words and writing and collating the songs for the pageants and in other ways exercising her tireless versatility and devotion. She was an accomplished reader and speaker and the holder of The Poetry Society's Gold Medal for verse speaking, and an eminently successful teacher.

## TURN O' THE YEAR

THE time of the honeysuckle is over and gone,
The time we longed for;
And before the honeysuckle the primrose died.
The gardens glow with roses and hollyhocks,
But soon will dahlias bloom and the robin sing
And Summer will begin to die.
There will never be a season again like this,
For never before was earth so beautiful,
The flowers so fine, the birds so sweet-toned;
We have said so each year, and therefore it must be true.
The swallow is still with us,
But the nightingale has long been silent.
And the time of honeysuckle is over and gone,
The time we longed for.

D. E. Christine Tomlin.

# POETRY IN RELATION TO LIFE

[*Summary of the St. Olave's Grammar School annual poetry lecture given by Mr. P. H. B. Lyon, Head Master of Rugby School.*]

FEW people would deny to poetry value of some kind or other. But it remains an unfortunate fact that a majority of people are convinced that it is not of value to them. Such a breach between poets and the people does harm to both; the poets become unreal and the people see no vision. And where there is no vision the people perish.

To what are we to ascribe this ignorance of poetry and indifference to it as a whole? Largely, I think, to a misunderstanding of what poetry really is. Some people link it with childhood, with nursery rhymes, and "saying your poetry" and reading primers. Those who banish poetry with their school books, and all recollection of it with their school experience, are not likely to look on it as suitable pabulum for men. To them poetry smacks of something rather effeminate, only in place when we are discussing the softer side of life, sentiment, and fairies, and fluttering emotions. However, it is hard to maintain this view when confronted with most of the poems to be found in any reasonable anthology, or with those ballads which are part of the heritage of every nation. There isn't much that is childish or effeminate in Homer.

There are those, again, who look on poetry as something too difficult for them. This is sometimes only a pose, in an age when "highbrow" is a term of reproach, and the silly ass or the strong silent man the most popular type of hero. More often it is a genuine objection, dating in many instances from a bitter memory of the English poetry that was "done" for School Certificate. The name Shakespeare should awaken the happiest and warmest of recollections; all too frequently it brings with it the smell of stuffy class-rooms and a vision of innumerable notes in the smallest of print.

Poetry often *is* difficult; but it is scarcely a compliment to the ordinary man's intelligence to suggest that that is in itself sufficient reason for avoiding it. But we must remember that there are two kinds of difficulty. One is artificial, a wrapping-up of something simple in complicated language; only a second-rate poet, or a first-rate poet in his second-rate moments, is guilty of such shallow obscurities. But there is also the difficulty which indicates depth, and depth not only of language but of thought. This should be not an obstacle but a challenge; almost the most attractive difficult passages are those which sound easy until we study them;—Hamlet's soliloquies are good examples of this. Yet there is a third and best kind of writing, the writing of the supreme poet at the supreme moment, which towers into clear simplicity like a mountain-peak above the mists. And to attain to this is well worth the labour of the climb. There is something about certain brief phrases in Shakespeare's

tragedies which is far removed from and far above both the clouds of wordy versification and the level valleys of prose.

And others persist in regarding poetry as somehow artificial, in comparison with prose's naked naturalness. They live in a prose world and get their idea of what the poetic world is like from the more ambitious flights of the more uneducated journalists. The language we sometimes call "journalese" is the plain man's idea of poetic diction; and to him the poetic world is full of lush herbage, and feathered songsters, and babbling rivulets, and denizens of the deep, instead of the grass, and birds, and streams, and fishes he knows and appreciates in his own surroundings. Wordsworth fought a valiant battle against this kind of thing. It is indeed always your real poet who is most contemptuous of such debased currency, such tawdry second-hand fineries; for he has learnt to love and value those words which say exactly what he means, not those which wrap his intention up in highly-coloured cotton-wool.

For poetry is just that; the simplest and most direct way of expressing certain feelings and certain visions of truth. Prose deals with the matter-of-fact world, and normally with the particular rather than the universal. Poetry knows of other worlds; and even in this world she can, like all art, defy time and space and conquer the limitations of mortality. Whether it be the first flush of love, the dull ache of the exile, the pangs of *Weltschmerz*, or the uprush of sudden joy—for the finest and most universal expression of all such feelings it is to our poets we must go.

Yet the doubt lingers. Follow it home and it will almost certainly have its roots in a suspicion that poetry and poets are somehow "unnatural." The ordinary man, asked to describe a poet (or an artist or a musician for that matter), almost inevitably envisages a very flabby or weedy individual, with fishlike hands and long hair; someone with something "queer" about him. And to be "queer" is to be outside the British pale. Well, some of them are like that, caring as they do less for the body than the spirit. But what of Shakespeare, the successful man of business? What of Milton, fighting all his life for freedom, sitting down when old and going blind to *begin* his *Paradise Lost*? What of Bridges, who could walk any man off his legs and wrote his mightiest work as a tough old giant of over eighty? What of the war poets? What of Masefield, serving on a windjammer as a boy of 14? "Flabby" and "weedy" scarcely belong to them, or indeed to any poet who counts. Poetry unnatural? How is it then that children start to sing almost before they learn to speak? How is it that verse has been the earliest literary form of all peoples? How is it that at the court of Elizabeth it was part of a gentleman's education to learn to write verses, as it was to be a soldier and a courtier?

No. Poetry, which flourishes in men more than in women, and flourishes most at the most active age of manhood, is not unmanly or

unnatural. And so the doubters are silenced at last; and poetry is vindicated as being virile, simple, natural, and direct. It is accordingly not undesirable. Yet we have still to show that it is not only desirable but necessary; not one of the decorations of the cultured life, but part of the very stuff of any life which is not merely animal existence. Can we do this? We can at least try.

What are the three good things of life? If you answer "Money, health, and popularity" and know what you are saying, then poetry is not likely to appear to you essential. But if, after some hesitation and discussion, you are prepared to say "Goodness, Beauty, and Truth," then we can talk business. Let us assume that you will at least accept this suggestion for want of a better. What then can poetry do to help us on the road to our goal?

I am not altogether sure about poetry's relation to Goodness. I only know that homilies in verse are rather distressing, and most poets who set out to teach me to be good arouse my criminal instincts. The "memorable" Quotations which round off sermons, the great majority of hymns, and the sententious rhymed moralizings of writers like Ella Wheeler Wilcox, these are for the most part very poor poetry and not always good religion. Rather I think the spirit of goodness shows itself best in that poetry which is least self-conscious; breathing in the innocent piety of the old carol-writers, or of Herbert and Traherne; or breaking again and again through the rainbow mists of Shelley; simple in Wordsworth, austere in Bridges, passionate in Wilfred Owen; only now and then deliberately purposeful, as in "Jerusalem."

But if poetry be only at times the handmaid of Goodness, it is inevitably and always linked with Beauty. It is one of the surest keys to beauty anywhere; and only if beauty is regarded as superfluous can poetry be dismissed as a luxury. The weak and the strong, the satisfied and the despairing, all alike have need of beauty. It may be that we look to beauty as an escape from life; this is not the highest of aims, yet, because it is at any rate beauty that we seek, the poet is ready to abet us. "When music sounds, gone is the earth I know"; and poetry is only a special kind of music. Or perhaps we are in love with natural beauty in our ordinary lives. Here no one can guide us like the poet, whose keen vision and imaginative sympathy reveal so much that we have never seen. For a simple illustration of this, read Rupert Brooke's *Great Lover*; for less simple examples, go to almost any modern poet. Surely, if we would have beauty we must have poetry too.

And beauty is the highroad to at least one form of Truth. At this statement Mr. Worldly-Wise sits up and takes notice. Goodness he applauds in public and rejects in private; Beauty he dismisses with a patronizing contempt; but Truth, though in practice he makes every effort to distort or over-reach her, has a knack of turning the tables on her traducers. And it is just that kind of truth which the

plain man tends to be ignorant of or to ignore that poetry reveals.

For experience, and the truth we learn from experience, is of two kinds. There is the truth of material fact, of information, of accumulated knowledge, of the world of science. For such truth prose is probably the right medium. But there is a truth also of intuition, of interpretation, of wisdom, of the world of philosophy and religion; and here, more often than not, poetry is the more accurate channel of communication. As before, poetry deals with the universals where prose catalogues particulars. The truth about the sea-faring of the Phœnicians can to some extent be learnt from histories and encyclopedias; but there remains a tract which we only discover when we read a few verses in the 107th psalm.

No one can teach you or anyone else to like and to desire poetry. All that any of us can do it to tell you the road, to lend you a map, to point to some of the landmarks on the way. You must go your own journey; and on that journey of all delights I would wish you "bon voyage."

* * *

We found the normal size of THE POETRY REVIEW too limited for our needs and were hampered by the delay in resuming monthly publication, suspended early in the last war. But we are gratified to hear, now we are subjected to further limitation of space, that some readers are re-discovering the wealth of fine and apposite new work and criticism and other literary material embalmed in back numbers and perhaps not fully appreciated until now. We welcome inquiries for any part of the past thirty-one volumes.

Now that we must concentrate more than ever before each issue is likely to be more strongly individualistic. The scheme underlying each number has been remarked upon—although not rigidly marked or specialised, the contents of no issue have been casual and accidental but have formed a concrete and apposite pattern. Some change in the general scheme will be now apparent, With fewer books for review, we shall not be compelled to neglect so many and may be able to deal more comprehensively with the more significant. This is surely the first function of a Poetry Review. Our venerable Chairman has complained that we have not observed it more strictly. Yet in this issue, in addition to the chief articles being critical, we include almost as many new poems as usual. They are more concentrated than prose —a pressing consideration now, enabling us to present infinite treasure in a little space. Instead of a "leader," we have Mr. Richard Church's epitome of the present war situation. And Mr. Rostrevor Hamilton, forsaking the brief epigram, out of the same source of inspiration addresses a newer generation than the one we are constantly being urged to find room for but which has never been neglected by THE POETRY REVIEW. Other poems, although they may show more detachment, also serve an immediate purpose, even when they merely provide terse comment. For further argument on these editorial matters see our last issue and our next.

# MODERN KOREAN POETRY

Dr. Inso'b Zo'ng, professor of Phonetics and English Literature in the Chosen Christian College, Seoul, Korea, on his way home from taking part in a learned congress in Copenhagen, engaged our interest in a unique MS. collection of modern Korean poems translated into English by himself and Prof. H. C. Coen and Mr. B. S. Gim. From a number of examples selected by Capt. Cranmer Byng we have the privilege of publishing the appended typical lyrics :

### I LOVE YOUR STORY LIKE A SKYLARK'S. BY P. Y. BAG

I love your story like a skylark's,
But I love your silence far above that.
Speech is nothing but a beautiful little toy ;
I am a child growing weary of the toy.

I love your song more than your speech,
How mysterious and joyous is your song !
In the summer twilight, with the red evening glow shining in the western sky.
How much your melody delights me !

When you are tired of singing, you keep silent leaning against the window,
Ah ! How true and splendid the silence is !
Like a dream, I long for the red glow of the summer twilight,
Through the beautiful window where you silently stand.

### MY SONG. BY G. S. YI

I sing a song—
An endless mournful melody,
When all things in deep silence lie,
And all alone I be,
Ceaselessly I raise my cry.

My cry ascends and floats away,
Scattered by whirling winds afar.
As a woman pouring water all the day
Into leaking water jar,
I sing my song.

I sing, and incline mine ear,
If perchance there come to me
Some answering echo I may hear—
From distant mountain, field, or sea.
And sing my endless song again.

I AM THE SON OF THIS COUNTRY. BY Z. D. YANG

The people of this country,
Their minds are whiter than their clothes,
And they love wine and song as their wives,—
I am the son of this country.

Though they are good and humble,
Though they dream always and smile,
They are the people of this country.
Weak and without blood—
Ah! I am the son of this country.

The people of this country,
Their minds are poorer than their homes.
They love peace and freedom as their brethren.
I am the son of this country.

Though they are lonely and solitary,
Though they are weary and shed tears,
They are the people of this country
With life and breath in their bodies.
Ah! I am the son of this country.

A SECRET. BY I. S. JUNG

My rumpled hair
Combing neatly,
I put on the little comb
You sent to me.

My weed-stained fingers,
Washing neatly,
I put on the little ring
You sent to me.

While little comb
And little ring I wear,
In the glass I gaze at myself
Reflected there.

On my hand
And in my hair,
Is hidden a holy secret
That none can share.

VINE. BY T. S. NO.

On every pearl-coloured cluster, the grapes all ripen black
As if the eyes of my dear love were hidden there,
Every time I pick a grape, I kiss my lover's eye.

All through the Summer the green leaves hide the pearls,
The secretly grown passion turns black before 'tis done being red,
I place the fully-ripened fruit in my hand and gaze upon it.

The clusters served upon a dish seem like assembled dark-night-stars,
For this one night shall I place them in my room and yearn for my love!
Even while I put the grapes into my mouth, I am weeping.

THE SCRIPT ON THE WALL. BY H. B. O.

On the wall of a decaying house
Some characters were written in blood,
And though not much time has passed,
Already moulded, the blood does not clearly show.

The way of humanity has no end,
If the rest of this wall falls down,
Because of the frequent wind and rain,
Where else shall I, groping, trace
The narrow thread of my descent?

When holding a candle in my two hands
In the depths of night, sitting on fallen leaves,
I humbly begin again to read the script,
The beard of my grandfather flutters in wind.

IF MY LOVE CALLS ME. BY S. Z. SIN

Softly as the golden ginko leaves in Autumn
Are shaken and scattered by the wind,
So will I go
If she calls me.

Silently as the new moon
That peers through the mist above the lake
And, voiceless, passes o'er the mountain.
So will I go
If she calls me.

Gently as the streams beneath the warmth of Spring
Run round and round the end of the sky.
So will I go
If she calls me.

William Hayley, the poet (1745–1820), was at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. He wrote lives of Milton, Cowper, and Romney,

*The Triumphs of Temper*, and a sparkling autobiography. He succeeded his father as squire of Eartham, in Sussex, but later let that estate to Mr. Huskisson (President of the Board of Trade in 1823). Cowper recorded his opinion of Eartham :

> I had no conception that a poet could be the owner of such a paradise, and his house is as elegant as his scenes are charming.

From Eartham, Hayley moved to Felpham, near Bognor Regis, where he built for himself as good a house as his lessened fortune enabled him to do, and he made up for its comparative smallness by surmounting the stucco walls with a boldly castellated parapet. He was fond of riding, but his umbrella, used oftener as a windscreen than to keep off rain, and the heavy spurs he wore, resulted in frequent throws, as he had a preference for high-spirited horses. Hayley's epitaph by his friend, Mrs. Opie, the novelist, is on a tablet in Felpham Church. William Blake took a cottage in Felpham to be near Hayley, whose works he illustrated, and in a letter to the wife of Flaxman, the sculptor, Blake wrote :—

> Do all that you can and all that you may
> To entice him to Felpham and far away.
> Away to sweet Felpham, for Heaven is there ;
> The ladder of angels descends through the air !

Hayley helped to secure the acquittal, at Chichester on January 11th, 1804, of " William Blake, an engraver at Felpham, who was tried on a charge exhibited against him by two soldiers, for uttering seditious and treasonable expressions such as " D—— the King, all his subjects, his soldiers, they are all slaves : wait till Buonaparte comes." The Turret House, Hayley's home at Felpham, now for sale, has been held by the family of the present vendor for 80 years. The grounds contain trees planted by Hayley, among them a mulberry.

At the Dollar Poetry Club's meeting on December 7th new members joined the club. Notwithstanding war work upon which nearly every member is engaged, more than one-half of the enrolled members and some friends attended. Greetings were read from the Director of The Poetry Society, from Dr. Arthur Melville Clark, Hon. President, and from the Moderator-elect of the Church of Scotland, a regular member of the Club. The President and two Vice-Presidents spoke selected verses. Mr. Walker's extracts illustrated the expanding idea in the thought of our people beginning with pre-Chaucer writers of verse continuing to present-day poets. Dr. Drummond instances the growth of American poetry and outlined English derivative influences which were changed by the natural social developments in the United States of America. Dr. Gordon illustrated the spiritual forces of inspirational poetry and spoke of the permanent foundations of its sources.

# INSINCERITY IN SPEAKING VERSE

*The first of a short series of articles by teachers of diction and verse-speaking*

HAVE you ever stared miserably at the carpet when called upon to listen to a drawing-room recitation? Why is it that a real poem, articulated clearly, so often causes acute distress in a listener—not only distress, but the kind of embarrassment a sensitive person suffers when someone takes the name of God in an unctuous voice?

I have been at some pains to analyze this distress, this embarrassment, in the presence of poetry, and have discovered that wrong inflections are the cause of the embarrassment and insincerity the cause of the wrong inflections. So that the tap root of the whole trouble is insincerity.

The first essential is to understand a poem before attempting to speak it. Not until the poem has become part of yourself, in the way that your own thoughts are, should it be said aloud for others to hear. If you have not *experienced* the poem, your inflections will betray you, and you will cause your audience the vicarious shame which, whether they know it or not, they suffer because of the discrepancy between the real poem and your interpretation of it. A very young child will use the right inflections instinctively because he is thinking of nothing but the poem. He will say it as naturally as if the words came out of his own head. But an older student has not the lovely simplicity of childhood, and unless she (I say *she* for the sake of convenience and because elocution is a subject more often taught in girls' schools than in boys') is taught that the *poem* is what matters and that she must give the right emphasis to its key words, she is apt to be distracted by all sorts of considerations into thoughtless and artificial emphasis away from the poet's meaning.

But once she understands the poem and has grasped the fact that it should be spoken as naturally as if she had only just thought of the words, she can be trusted not to distress her audience by that false emphasis and meaningless boom to which we are only too often treated in drawing-rooms and at elocution competitions.

There is a technical side to the achievement of this sincerity. It is not possible to speak poetry sincerely and naturally without giving some thought to the question of inflections.

One does not realize, perhaps, that in ordinary speech one's voice is rising and falling all the time. If you listen simply to the *sound* of a sentence, you will realize that it has its high and low notes, i.e., the emphasized words; the highest (or, in some cases, as in a question, the lowest) note being the key word, or climax, of the sentence. A *downward* inflection (i.e., when the voice descends after the key word) is used for emphasis, an *upward* inflection for unemphasized words.

Take, for an easy example, Harold Monro's poem, *The Rebellious Vine*, which in the emphasis is marked to change in every line:

I will not *grow*
I will *not* grow
I *will* not grow
and *I will not grow*

It will be noticed, if these four lines are said aloud, that the voice rises till it reaches its top note in the key word, and then drops; the last line being on an ascending scale of dropping inflections.

Upward inflections (which are used for unemphasized words) are also of the greatest importance in the speaking of poetry, where it is so often necessary to pause on account of the rhythm—

When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils

Listen to this sentence properly spoken and you will find that the voice ascends all the time (with a pause after "crowd" to mark the rhythm) until it reaches its peak in the word "daffodils," the key word, and then drops for the emphasis; all the words being unemphasized until the climax is reached. When, as is only too often the case, this poem is spoken with a dropped inflection, or emphasis, "on crowd," you get the insincerity which means a wrong interpretation. The speaker has not entered into the poet's experience.

Most students on first reading the lines will stress the word "crowd": but a very little boy of my acquaintance, without any teaching, went straight for the daffodils. With a child's vision, he saw them dancing in the breeze, as the poet did. He was not deterred on his way by *crowd* or *host*, nor did he stop to give undue emphasis to *golden*. His voice kept up till it reached the climax, and then fell for the emphasis, because he had his eye on the daffodils themselves.

Of course, the degree to which the voice rises or falls in a sentence depends on the meaning. If the words *O, God of battles, steel my soldiers' hearts* were said as a command, the voice would rise sharply to *steel*. Whereas in the same sentence said as a prayer (which, of course, it is), the rise and fall would be more gradual.

A reciter, then, requires first the imagination which enables her to re-create for herself the poet's experience, and secondly the intelligence to use the inflections which best convey the poet's meaning. Let her think first and foremost of the poem, let her motto be—"The poem, the whole poem, and nothing but the poem," and there will be no question of self-consciousness or embarrassment. There will only be poetry.

LILY TOWERS.

Dr. Alfred Noyes has been with us in Vancouver, Irene H. Moody reports, first as guest of the local branch of the Canadian Authors' Association, then in a public address on "The Spirit of England." He gave us great pleasure—his poems are beautiful and full of feeling; and he reads them exceedingly well. I had the pleasure of sending you my greetings through his kindness.

# SCENE, A FOREST

## 1918—1940

"AN armistice! An armistice!
For we can do no more
Honourable peace to follow
Honourable war!"
Uniforms of grey are moving
Through a wood to where
Uniforms of blue are waiting
By a Pullman car.

"Honourable peace our mission"—
"Crime must pay the price!
In this document you tender
Abject and entire surrender.
Sign, that crime may cease.
Tell us then what you are granted"—
"Honourable peace."

A sleeve of grey must needs obey
When a sleeve of blue commands.
The sleeve of grey, it signs away
The lordship and the lands.
The aeroplanes, the railway trains,
The big guns and the little ones,
The bayonets, bombs and battleships
To-day are changing hands!

O look in this metropolis
For here the steeples shout...
Homo Sapiens is kissing
Someone in the street.
He climbs a lamp-post, sings a song,
Waves a flag about;
Because he hears, or thinks he hears,
Between the salvos and the cheers,
Go swinging through detested squares
A blue beloved coat.

O look in that metropolis,
  For there the bells are mute.
Homo Sapiens is sitting
  Staring at the grate.
He drops the paper, wipes his eyes,
  Lets the fire go out;
Because he hears, or thinks he hears
Along disastrous thoroughfares
Come swinging through beloved squares
  A blue detested coat.

O rain from off the western ocean,
  Rain of sweet increase,
Wash the bloody breast of Europe,
  Heal that broken place. . . .
Twenty years of rain on Europe.
  Twenty years of peace!

If the rain will draw a harvest
  From the howling mud—
If the rain will make a briar
Blossom from the bloody wire—
  Surely it will flood
Where another desert lies
Hidden by the human eyes?
  Where a singing bird
In the human mind's oppressed,
That will utterly be blessed
  When the song is heard?

Surely, surely it will flow
  Such a little way
Trickle there with ease to-morrow
  If not yet to-day,
Where the final desert lies
Only just behind the eyes?
Where the singer is confined
Only just within the mind? . . .

Twenty years of rain on Europe,
  Withered by a flame.
Twenty years of peace in Europe,
  Gone like a dream. . . .

Once again the nightmare gallops,
  And the bricks come down,
And the young man's look of hatred
  Crowns him with a thorn;
But a heart's now quicker emptied
  By a better gun.

" An Armistice! An armistice!
  For we can do no more.
Honourable peace to follow
  Honourable war! "

Scene, a forest. Actors, action,
  All things as before.
Not a costume to be altered!
  What is altered here?—
Uniforms of blue are moving
  Through a wood to where
Uniforms of grey await them
  By the Pullman car.

" Honourable peace our mission "—
  " History named the place!
In this document you tender
Abject and entire surrender.
  Sign: it is the price.
Tell the world then what we grant you."—
  " Honourable peace."

A sleeve of blue, it can but do
  What a sleeve of grey commands.
The sleeve of blue it signs in two
  The lordship and the lands.
The aeroplanes, the railway trains

The big guns and the littles ones
To-day are changing hands!

O look in this metropolis
For here the steeples shout
Homo Sapiens is dancing,
Dancing in the street . . .
O look in that metropolis
For there the bells are mute,
Homo Sapiens is staring,
Staring at a grate. . . .

O rain, rain from the West, the ocean,
For the dumb, now sing,
For the desolate, be Eden,
For the wound, a tongue.
Always for the wound be weeping.
I think it will be long
Before the desert learns to flower,
And that song is sung.

LAURENCE WHISTLER.

## CROSS ROADS

*"'Tis not the end my friend!"*

IF this we could but know
Then gladly could we go
Upon our separate ways.

Different strains will echo through our ears,
Different brains will hammer out our shape,
Different sins will suck our strength away,
Different creeds will clamour for our faith.

And when we meet again,
What will my smile mean then:
Still a link from soul to soul,
Or a gesture of the face
Mere manners of our race.

JOAN EASTMAN.

## WONDER

HOW wonderful it is, that a chance meeting
Between two ordinary people
Shallow and selfish like the rest of us
Should elevate them both to rank of Gods :
That flesh that hung in soulless apathy
On sapless brute insensate bones
Should now contain a noble surging sickness :
That weary gait and feckless eyes
Should now reflect a paradise :
Ah lucky ones, enjoy the lovely flame while yet it burns
Dust to dust and commonplace to commonplace returns.

ROGER WARK.

## REVERIE

THEN let your mind,
On tenuous moth-like feet,
Circle the inner staircases that wind
Where old dreams meet.

Through shell-like whorls,
Through clinging threads of thought,
Till the bright inner consciousness unfurls
The vision sought.

Old memories shine,
Old dreams, old reveries,
With moonlit colours of a columbine
That no one sees.

So shines for me,
A dim, high-ceilinged room,
Alcoved, soft shadowed as the sea,
With branchy gloom.

A violin,
And the high notes hovering flight,
Like the mating of moths hid in
A summer's night.

The hands that play,
Flash a wizardly white,
But the face, strive to see as I may,
Is hid from sight.

Is hid from sight,
Is washed by the waves of the years,
Softly worn, slipped away, vanished quite,
By my own tears.

ELLODE COLLINS.

## FAREWELL IN WAR

I SHALL see you again . . .
Farewells are sacred now,
Solemn and tense with strain.
We kiss beloved lips and brow
(Parting but for a day)
As if we journeyed far away . . .
Yet, at the holy twilight hour,
When trees are still
And even the winds are wonder-shod,
When the thirsting world drinks deep of God—
I know that He has power
To hold us, if He will,
Through anguish and despair,
Within His care.

But if not—if it must be
That the breaking idols crush us down
And set our spirits free—
Beyond the darkness and dread,
Beyond the stars and the sunset glow,
Where beauty finds its crown,
Where spring to life the dreams that were dead,
And flowers immortal grow—
Beloved, where light and love remain,
I shall see you again

MELFIN W. JONES.

## BETTER THAN LOVE

ARE you there? Can you hear?
Listen, try to understand.
O be still, become an ear,
For there is darkness on this land.
Stand and hearken, still as stone,
For I call to you alone.

Who can be what the weed was
In the empty afternoon?
Who can match me the wild grass,
Sighing its forgotten tune;
Who is equal to that shell,
Whose spiral is my parable?

No human eye reflects the weed,
Burning beneath the lonely sun:
The wild hard grass spangled with seed
Is still unmatched by anyone:
The justice of the shell is still
Above the mind, above the will.

Since love and beauty, blown upon,
Are not desired, nor spoken of,
Hear me, you solitary one,
Better than beauty or than love;
See in the weed, the shell, the grass,
But never in my kind, alas!

The ragged weed is truth to me,
The poor grass honour, and the shell
Eternal justice, till I see
The spirit rive the roof of hell
With light enough to let me read
More than the grass, the shell, the weed.

RUTH PITTER.

Author's Note on *Better than Love*, at the request of the Editor:
This is an attempt to invoke and to celebrate in verse the spirit which I perceive in life other than human, that spirit which has been for ages the refuge of the contemplative mind from the distortions of its own

emotions. That mind instinctively chooses for the objects of its contemplation creatures which have never been subjugated to the will of man: it knows, for instance, that the beautiful garden apple-tree with its sweet fruit has left its bitter wildness unattached somewhere, a rejected suffering which remains to be endured, and it prefers the acrid crab which carries the bitter to be consumed with the sweet, not separating them by an act of will. Similarly, it prefers wildernesses to gardens, and (in the higher flights of sanctity) deserts to wilderness: and it sees the sacred graces of freedom and honour in the poorest and most vulnerable animal that is truly wild. It feels a deep pang of compunction when it sees the wild man tamed, even if he has wasted his life miserably in placating demons. It builds its own nest lightly and cheaply, and laments not if it decays, for the heart is not soon broken that bows to the law of disintegration, and refuses to delay the spring by seeking to retain the autumn. Of the form of the poem there is little to be said, except that it interests me to see how my work has progressed from the obscurely ornate to a simplicity which is not like a primitive innocence, but more, I hope, like an innocence regained. As for the music, I never consider a musical effect deliberately, and know nothing of this as a conscious art, so that I must leave the reader to discover what harmony it may possess.—R.P.

## JUNE 1940

HOW strange to think, so short a while ago,
We walked together on that stretch of sands
That now for the next thousand years or so
Will hold you close, with soft and yellow hands.

I think that's why you loved the sun and rain,
Knowing how short your time was going to be,
Ere your young passion and your briefest pain
Was lulled for ever by that endless sea.

When you were waiting for that shell-swept boat,
You turned and saw Death pointing to your bed,
So laid your body down in khaki coat;
And then marched on to join the happy Dead.

. . . . .

Perhaps again I'll walk that stretch of sands
When peace prevails on all these weary lands.
Nothing I'll find but sea and the wide skies. . . .
Silence unbroken. . . . And a silence cries.

CYNTHIA PALMER.

# CHARLES WILLIAMS ON "TALIESSIN THROUGH LOGRES"

WHEN I was asked to write a few notes on the composition of one of my poems I permitted myself to propose the series called *Taliessin* because probably I know more of the way that that was written than I do of any other. The Editor was good enough to accept this suggestion instead of insisting on my composing a special poem for the purpose.

It has sometimes been said that it is necessary to know Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* in order to follow *Taliessin*. I very much hope that this is not so, both because I should think it improper in principle for any poet to require from his readers the knowledge of another work and also because the chance of any interest in *Taliessin* would thereby be considerably decreased. But it is true that *Taliessin* did, in a sense, begin with certain things in Malory. It began also, perhaps even earlier, in a vague disappointment with the way in which Tennyson treated the Hallows of the Grail in Balin and Balan. I am not attacking Tennyson as a poet; I am only saying that in this particular respect his treatment of the Sacred Lance as a jumping-pole left a good deal to be desired and even to be done. I may perhaps be allowed to say that my readers must be asked to treat such sentences with goodwill. I am not claiming to be better than Tennyson. It was clear that the great and awful myth of the Grail had not been treated adequately in English verse. What then of English prose?

At first, and for a long time, I was inclined to think that Malory had done it. It is true that the main part of his novel was irrelevant to the theme, but the hints in those parts which dealt with the theme were of very high value. It could not, surely, be by accident that the three Lords of the Quest were distinguished as they were along the line of mortal love. The character of the High Prince Galahad, of course, was taken by him direct from his original. I was too young to have been deceived, at that time, by the nonsense talked a little earlier about Galahad being bloodless and so on. Our general culture served me better.

Galahad could not be preoccupied with women because he was preoccupied with something much more vital. But next in degree was Percivale, and Percivale was in some undefined love-relation to Blanchefleur who was called his "sister," and whose dead body was carried to Sarras by him and by the other questing lords on the Ship of King Solomon. And lastly there was Bors, who was, it seemed, married to the Lady Elaine and the father of two children. Here was a significant hierarchy; and yet the hierarchy was one, for all three reached Sarras, and if Galahad alone achieved, yet it might be held that the Galahad-in-Bors achieved as much as did the individual High Prince.

> By three ways of exchange the City sped to the City;
> against the off-shore wind that blew from Sarras
> the ship and the song flew.
>
> Before the helm the ascending-descending sun
> lay in quadrilateral covers of a saffron pall
> over the bier and the pale body of Blanchefleur,
> mother of the nature of lovers, creature of exchange;

I take these images then as examples—the Sacred Spear bleeding with the human blood of Christ (that is also, of Man), the Dolorous Blow, and the three hierarchical lords of the Quest. And from that point the history of Taliessin is a history of two things (i) of the development of the Images (ii) of the discovery of the rhythmical technique. I shall not be expected here to give a full account of either; it would be of interest to no-one; it would bore me to write; and it would quite certainly be untrue. But I may take a few detached points.

As far as the Images are concerned, I suppose one of the most important is the identification of the Empire of Byzantium (in one significance) with the human organism. I shall maintain against all accusation that this, as they say, *happened*, and was not due to a curious ingenuity on my part. I could not undertake to say in what order that identification proceeded. If one considered at all the general historic period of Arthur, it was clear that the great and outstanding institution (beside the Church) was the Empire, and whether one set the centre of the Empire at Rome or at Byzantium was a matter of choice. That I did choose Byzantium was due, perhaps, to a romantic love of the (then) strange, but

it was a little due to the sense that the Byzantine Emperor was a much more complex poetic image than the Roman. Mr. Yeats had not then written his Byzantium poems ; or if so, I had not read them. In one or two earlier poems of my own, the Emperor was a kind of sacerdotal royalty. But gradually he became—I would not simply say God but at least God as active, God as known in Church and State, God as ruling men.

> The Acts issue from the Throne.
> Under it, translating the Greek minuscula
> to minds of the tribes, the identities of creation
> phenomenally abating to kinds and kindreds,
> the household inscribes the Acts of the Emperor ;
> the logothetes run down the porphyry stair
> bearing the missives through the area of empire.

What else religion is had obviously to be kept for the Quest and the Achievement of the Grail. Byzantium then was the place of the centre, the providence of the actual world.

The use of the word Caucasia is another example of development. The word was originally ' Circasica ' ; it came, of course, from the harems of the *Arabian Nights*, and I had used it lightly in certain allusions to frank non-significant sex affairs. But presently the use of that word became impossible for several reasons ; it refused to bear the weight with which I wished to charge it. Fortunately the other word Caucasia offered itself. It was more historic, it had larger scope, it (like Byzantium) was capable of *meaning* more. That it referred (anatomically) more particularly to the buttocks was a late development. I can never see why the buttocks are funnier than any other part of the body ; they support us when we sit, they are balance and (in that sense) justice. They are erotic, it is true, and that was an advantage for the poem ; but they are plainly and naturally so ; they are not mixed up, as eyes or hands may be, with the active moral question.

Another image which turned out to be capable of more than one significance was the hazel. Merlin had been saved by Swinburne, in the new force with which in *Tristram of Lyonesse* he charged the Merlin-Nimue relationship, from the weakness of the older tales, and when the prophetic wizard of Malory was considered free from this, he took on

all the qualities of Time. But he remained a white magician, a theurgic power, and the rod of a magician is not a toy. It is energy and direction. It occurred to me that in the traditions this rod was normally of hazel, and the dictionary confirmed this. But rods are used for more than magic; as "goads for cattle, disciplines for offences, measuring-rods, etc." So the cut rod of hazel became everywhere an instrument of order and measurement. It corresponded to the arm and to prosody, to anatomy and to law, to all roads and rules. The uncut hazel, with its nuts, is in some sense the fruition of this.

> The nuts of the uncut hazel fall
> down the cut hazel's way.

Relating to this "cut" significance are such references as:

> "with the hazel of ceremony, fetched to his hand—cut,
> smoothed, balsamed with spells, blessed with incision—
> he struck from the body of air the anatomical
> body of light;"
>
> "I have known,"
> she said, with the scintillation of a grave smile,
> "the hazel's stripes on my shoulders; the blessed luck
> of Logres has a sharp style, since I was caught free
> from the pirate chaos savaging land and sea;"
>
> "On the opposite wall, in a laureate ceremony,
> Virgil to Taliessin stretched a shoot
> of hazel—the hexameter, the decasyllabic line—
> fetched from Homer beyond him;"

Such developments of images, as every worker in verse knows, are generally aided, and perhaps even chiefly caused, by the mere work at poems. I should be afraid to say how often the search for a rhyme or even for a longer or shorter word produced a new movement in the Images. The line "the ejection to the creature of the creature's rejection of salvation" was probably entirely brought about by the rhymes. It is true that such movements must be critically watched; ingenuity and haste are temptations, and pseudo-significances have to be rejected. The whole content of a long series of poems (especially if future poems on the same subject are intended) may not be clear at once, nor indeed can be. But enough is clear to purify the rash tendency to take *anything*; what Mr. John Sinclair has called, in the Introduction to his translation of Dante, "the

quality of relevancy " is of importance ; it is necessary to what Shakespeare in the *Dream* referred to as the growth of " something of great constancy." I have observed that to be true which I had before suspected—that, in any such series, the Images have continually to be re-imagined ; everything is given and yet nothing is permanently given. The poet who, in his own mind, mistakes his own word for the thing imagined is lost.

On the more technical side the only matter of interest is, I think, the use of interior rhymes. It is clear that, if one is using them, there should be some habit, if not law, in their use. It would be dangerous and silly to use them without some sort of norm, even if the abnormal is present almost as often as the normal, or more often. The poet must have an arrangement in his mind, however he may think it necessary to re-arrange it. In certain stanzaic poems, for example, the interior rhymes are exactly repeated in each stanza. In other non-stanzaic poems I have had in mind the provision of two rhyme-words to each two lines ; but these may be arranged as one wishes, and may indeed sometimes result in multiplying rhymes in one group and leaving another group without any. I do not find I altogether wish to continue using them ; the verse of future poems may, I hope, be more sparing, and even here one poem, *The Son of Lancelot*, is very nearly free from them. I must not now say more. No pains are too great for poetry ; it is sad that the pains do not always produce the poetry. One can but do what one can, and let the result be, carefully dissociating one's mind from any sense of personal importance in that to which one must give all one's personal energy. The more that disassociation can be managed, the greater the pleasure in the whole arduous business.

CHARLES WILLIAMS.

The Editor thinks the following note may be helpful: Welsh literature was united to the indigenous literature of the Aryan nations, chiefly by the two poets Taliessin and Aneirin. They wrote poetry based on historical tradition and its form was in stanzas of 3 or 4 lines, known as Englyn Poetry. Its special characteristic, that the poet was always in solitude. The Welsh Taliessin however, is of no definite importance in relation to Mr. William's poem Taliessin through Logres.

## "WHERE THE SLANT ELM FINGERS"

NIGHT has wiped the doubled world
Off the dumb pool's ebon slate:
Dreamers locked in troubled sleep
Murmur inarticulate. . . .

Where the slant elm fingers east
Coffined lie beyond all pain,
Though the bone-dust lingers on,
Men who'll never wake again.

They shall see red-clotted dawn
Climb no more the eastern sill,
Dance above time-rotted skulls
Spring on spring the daffodil:

Soon shall I, life's pother done,
This last assignation keep,
And, immured in mother earth,
Join them in eternal sleep.

E. CURT PETERS.

## THE MELODY OF WORDS

HOW wonderful the melody of words;
Take Milton's, Shelley's lines: what loveliness
They will surrender, as, with soft caress,
You let them gently trickle through your fingers
Like emeralds or pearls of liquid lambentness.
And as they fall, unearthly fragrance lingers.
Or call another sense unto the trial;
Hearken to flute, harp, dulcimer and viol,
And low, sad plaint of night-entrancing birds,
Or organ-thunder and the roll of drum
Telling of things that were, fore-telling things to come.

EDWARD VANDERMERE FLEMING.

[The late Sir Arnold Wilson, when Editor of *The Nineteenth Century*, having seen some of Mr. Fleming's work in verse, asked him to submit some poems, from which the above (with others) was selected for publication in the distinguished periodical that was once notable for its poetry. This poem had not appeared before Sir Arnold's resignation of the editorship and his successor neither used nor returned it.—ED.]

## WHEN I AM OLD AND FULL OF SLEEP

WHEN I am old and full of sleep
and all my dreams and dear delights
have sunk into the timeless deep
that marks not flight of days nor nights,
when eyes grow dim and hearing fails
and life has naught to offer me
save looking back, recounting tales
of childhood's charmèd memory.

When mambling lips can find no word,
and palsied limbs are cold as clay,
when spirit like a wounded bird
no more can rise and soar away,
and when my ears no longer hear
the alien cuckoo's dulcet call,
and sterile mind can draw no tear
nor spellbound fall 'neath beauty's thrall.

When skylarks soaring overhead
and thrushes in the apple tree
have no more power to make me shed
the glad, sad tears of ecstasy :

When I am old and full of sleep
and my dim eyes have lost their power
to gaze into night's infinite deep
and watch the stars break into flower :

Then God forbid that I should stay
in this cramp'd cell when springtime comes
to garland all the earth with may,
if senses fail and flesh becomes
a lump of cold redundant clay
with twitching lips and toothless gums,
that sits before the fire all day
mambling and sucking sugar plums.

When I am old and full of sleep,
too tired to greet the day dawn brings,

when round my bed the shadows creep,
give to my spirit eagles' wings,
then I shall know a sweet relief,—
life will have spent its hopes and fears
like rain upon a sun-parch'd leaf
will fall old age's easy tears.

And when the withered petals fall
from dying summer's last red rose,
beneath the glitt'ring frozen pall
of winter's cold insensate snows
the barren bough will once again
fruition find in leaf and flower,
when the sweet mystery of pain
gives place to spring's immortal hour,
instead of passion will come peace
and for life's fitful fever, calm,
in losing I shall find increase
for bitterness I shall find balm.

*O God, when I am tired and old*
*let me no trembling coward be,*
*give me the lamp of faith to hold,*
*to light me to eternity,*
*and give me courage to be bold*
*in death's extremity.*

EDITH M. WALKER.

## EPISTLE TO A FRIEND

A THIRD of my life I have carried thee,
Like the rose in my dress,
Not altogether in forgetfulness.

In grace or grief I have acknowledged thee
Always; and my heart's flight
Hath been to the great turrets of thy night.

In thy wild, bloody, public trysts remember this
Death now, and so permit
Only that we two meet where no child faints at it.

E. RADCLIFFE BINNINGTON.

## EPITAPH

PERHAPS only an elusive shadow
Who so strangely resembles whom I ceased to remember
Who once at night made a bright dream
Joyful with softness of arms and a long look
Saying " We shall meet again " while parting grew sad
As the hopeful eyes faded and I knew that only
To-morrow remained, another day to be lonely.

That was the Hamlet of eyes and hope and dream
Though not of heart. Heart chose the Peter Pan
Who wandered like a wish between the brain
And its desires. Wildly we strove
To an allotted end. Braving the other
We made our memories, which like lovers hold
Softly to evening, never to be old.

Out of a darkened history came the other
In the worst of possible places, rather prone
To admire the giant, the hero, the good at games,
Or just to be dull. This was the one
To walk up hills with or to take to pubs,
To scorn or be awed by, in the end to leave
For an older gladness and a new grief.

O the day will be bright to-morrow
For the evening is sorrow enough.

JOHN WALLER.

## TWINS OF SELF

HELP ! Murder ! Help ! Do you not hear ?
Did you not hear a groan ?
There ! There again ! It sounds quite near.
Now it is stifled to a dying moan,
A moaning cry. He cannot live much more.
His brother stifles him ! He grips him tight !
He kills him now ! He hated him before.
They were born twins, born in the self same hour.
He hated him, so brave he was, so true,

And *he* was just like others, just a common thing,
Common and cruel. See in the thin moonlight
A thin knife glimmers, glimmering over the heart!
Help! Murder! Help! Is there no earthly power
Can hold a common man from murdering?
Twin-born they were, they never were apart.
He is myself, my better self, and *he*—
He too is myself, and now he murders him!
Still, still he breathes, a quivering, dying breath;
He breathes. Oh haste! Come quick and see!
A fratricide must die, and death is grim;
Help! would you have me die a double death?
Both my two selves, the better and the worse—
Die, twins united in a double curse?
Help! Murder! Help! He is just breathing still!
Myself, my better self, my purposed will.

H. W. Nevinson.

## EVENSONG

IN the wet hedgerows
Weeping with rain,
The lanterns of the briar swing again,
Lit for the burial of June's wild rose.

No mourning wears the holly,
But her heartless leaves
Flaunt scarlet embroidery
On jagged sleeves.

And gossamer lace, like favours
Worn at a wedding feast,
In templed tree trunk wavers,
The only surpliced priest.

But the puffed robin's song
Is faint with forgotten things:
Leaves of the past, and the long
Silence of folded wings.

Brenda F. Skene.

## WE MUST BUILD NOW

WHEN Peace shall have returned to us again,
And we may sleep all quiet in our beds
The whole night through—and think no whit of it!
We will then build the city of our dreams—
The " noble streets and open ways therein."
The houses of our poor which lie as dust
And shambles now—shall then become our care,
The brightest jewel in our diadem,
Our boast, our splendour, our eternal pride ;
The very structure of our lives will change,
Wealth shall not buy us privilege, nor birth
Insure an easy access to command.
Then all men will be worthy of their hire,
And every man find useful work to do.
This shall become the State of Liberty—
Where all men dwell as brothers and are free.
And joy and happiness shall light the land.

No, if we build this city of our dreaming
We must build now, not when to-morrow comes—
Build with the shrapnel rattling around us,
Build while the guns are booming all about,
Build as the bombs make ruin of our houses,
Build in despair ; but all undaunted still.
Striving afresh and counting loss as teaching
A new restraint, and stubborn fortitude.
Wresting God's justice ; building up His Kingdom
There at the very gates of Hell itself.
For only so—thus—out of need and turmoil,
Because we " must " not as a " high ideal "
Welded together in red hot cohesion
Shall we be able to construct and plan
Not for our dreaming merely, but our living,
And for the generations yet to come.
Laying foundations sure, and strong, and stable,
That will not crack upon the wheel of Time,
Firm as the " rock of ages " as enduring
And making beauty permanent again.

If we should leave this work and turn to others
Intent on Present Victory alone,
We may well win the war but loose the freedom
For which we say we fight, and kill and die,
We may impose a righteous condemnation
Upon Dictators and their Satellites,
But this fair land of England which we cherish
Will be no better for their punishment—
And sick of battle, weary of our struggle
We will sink back forgetful of our "aim."
Ready—too ready to accept the offer
Of a lax Peace—so long as we are safe.
Drugged by the thought of quiet, and embracing
A phantom joy which will betray our trust.

Come let us wage a double war together,
Keen to the "evil thing" within our gates,
Strong in our faith, and hopeful of to-morrow
But doing all we can both HERE and NOW.
Breaking down barriers of class and breeding,
Giving our wealth, our labour, and our love
Not to our Country only but its people—
Determined on a New Morality.
So shall the seeds of Victory be scattered
And Peace be broadcast on a warless world.

FIONA CAMPBELL.

## BEAUTY

NOTHING may take beauty from the wise,
For loved beauty is never lost;
It dies not as frost
Or wind dies;
Knowledge of it springs
From living with lovely things,
And wakened eyes
Are lovely eyes!
Oh, beauty cools
And vanishes from fools,
But nothing may take beauty from the wise!

MARGERY SMITH.

# A CENTURY OF THOMAS HARDY

A CENTURY is a convenient unit of time, and Dr. Johnson, in assessing Shakespeare, called it "the term commonly fixed as the test of literary merit." Well, Thomas Hardy has survived that "test of literary merit" and (whatever we may think of the test as such) it is interesting to see that a product of the Victorian age still flourishes.

Some men—Jesus of Nazareth, for instance, and Newton, —may be said to have lived ahead of their time: which is a creditable achievement; but Hardy's achievement is even more creditable, because Hardy remains consistently topical.

> "Peace upon earth," was said. We sing it,
> And pay a million priests to bring it.
> After two thousand years of Mass
> We've got as far as poison gas.

What a piece of enduring topicality for a man who loved in leisure moments to chat with soldiers who had routed the Old Guard at Quatre Bras.

Thomas Hardy, as we all know, was born in Dorsetshire, in 1840, and was trained to be an architect. He sheered off to writing—comparatively late in life—and, after a brief, bitter struggle for recognition, led an uneventful life, fêted by friends and attacked by foes. His first wife suffered from mental instability; his second wife married him when he was seventy-four; some of his finest poems were written when he was over eighty.

Such, baldly enough, are the outlines of his career; and, as is to be expected, they give no indication of his personality. *Had* he a personality? Or was he negation personified? And above all, what of the much-vaunted "philosophy"?

In the preface to *Winter Words* appears the following categoric statement. "I also repeat what I have said before on such occasions—that no harmonious philosophy is attempted in these pages, or in any bygone pages of mine, for that matter." At the outset, then, we are to receive no help from Hardy; rather, he warns us that if we try to gauge his philosophy from his writings alone, we shall find

threads of thought only, not a woven pattern. Nevertheless, he possessed some marked intellectual tendencies, and these can be detected easily enough—though they do *not* constitute a system of philosophy.

His notion of God—a Creator—is vague. He confesses

> Long have I framed weak images of Thee,
> O Willer masked, who makest life become.

Hardy refers to Him sometimes as "The Prime Cause," sometimes as "The President of the Immortals," and sometimes as "The Immanent Will." He rejects all anthropomorphic doctrines.

Hardy is strong meat to the Christians, and to read his books is to be exalted (or debased) into a region of reasoned blasphemy. But, when all has been said and done, his cry was not so much against the Church as against the entire system of life. He looked at life, and dared to say that it had been ill-conceived.

> For life I never cared greatly,
> As worth a man's while.

or

> I'm Smith of Stoke, aged sixty odd;
> I've lived without a dame
> From youth-time on; and would to God
> My dad had done the same.

and the famous epigram on existence:

> A senseless school, where we must give
> Our lives that we may learn to live:
> A dolt is he who memorizes
> Lessons that leave no time for prizes.

What of the too-famous pessimism? Here, again, Hardy took care to protect himself—or to try to do so—against those thoughtless journalists who hastily cast about for a label which they might slap on him. "My last volume of poems," he writes, in the preface to *Winter Words*, "was pronounced wholly gloomy and pessimistic by reviewers—even by some of the more able class.—As labels stick, I foresee readily enough that the same perennial description will be set on the following pages, and therefore I take no trouble to argue on the proceeding, notwithstanding the

surprises to which I could treat my critics by uncovering a place here and there to them." Less subjectively (to quote from one his own poems) he might have remarked,

> If a way to the Better there be, it exacts
> A full look at the Worst.

Indeed, anyone troubling to read carefully through his works, will discover that—until the last war—Hardy entertained optimistic hopes for the welfare of the world. He hoped, that is to say, that the world would better itself

> In brotherhood bonded close, and graced
> With loving kindness.

It was upon loving-kindness (a phrase, incidentally, much used by Mr. Maugham) that Hardy built his rock of optimism. He held fast—until 1914—to the belief that " whether the human and kindred animal races survive till the exhaustion or destruction of the globe, or whether these races perish and are succeeded by others before that conclusion comes, pain to all upon that globe, tongued or dumb, shall be kept down to a minimum by loving-kindness, operating through scientific channels."

But 1914 shattered these hopes, which were never *securely* held, though often defiantly, and thenceforth until his death he was a pessimist of the most despondent school. In the last months of his life we find him writing:

> We are getting to the end of visioning
> The impossible within the universe,
> Such as that better whiles may follow worse,
> And that our race may mend by reasoning.

When he died, in 1928, he held no hope or belief that evolution was, *per se*, a process or gradual and inevitable amelioration for mankind. He believed—as, indeed, he had always feared—that we have been created by a blind power that is either ignorant of, or indifferent to, the fate of its creations. We all of us recall how the " President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had finished his sport with Tess."

The second Mrs. Hardy has left for us a picture of Hardy as an old man, serene and placid, gazing wistfully into the fire, while the younger generations wonderingly peer in at

him, unseen, through the autumn mist upon the window pane. Actually, his last years cannot have been either serene or placid. They may have been, and probably were, resigned—but not tranquil, for he was conscious of double failure. He had failed to be able to preach a cheering creed: and what creed he did preach was unpopular with the majority of gentlefolk, and with almost all others, too. I place the following poem as the most conspicuous admission of failure in English literature—conspicuous because of its utter lack of self-pity or apology. The old chap is whispering to himself, and this is what he mumbles,

O my soul, keep the rest unknown.
It is too like the sound of moan
When the charnel-eyed
Pale horse has neighed.
Yea, none shall gather what I hide.
Why load men's minds with more to bear
That bear already ails to spare?
From now alway
Till my last day
What I discern I will not say.

One last quotation from his poems: it is called *God's Education*, and it tells of the lingering illness of a young and beautiful woman, who at length dies, in great pain. This, I suggest, perfectly—because briefly, lucidly, and amply—epitomizes Hardy's final "philosophy" of life.

"Why did you serve her so?
Did you, for some glad day,
Hoard these her sweets?" He said: "Oh no,
They charm me not: I bid Time throw
Them carelessly away."

Said I: "We call that cruelty—
We, your poor mortal kind."
He mused: "The thought is new to me.
Forsooth, though I men's master be,
Theirs is the teaching mind."

And then, of course, there is the great "other aspect" of Hardy: the comic aspect: those undying peasants whom the dons call "Shakespearean." Some of the most charming humour in our language is to be found in *Under The Greenwood Tree*, that true finding of *metier* after

Meredith's fatal advice to find a " plot " had brought forth the over-dramatic *Desperate Remedies* (full though that book is of " future greatness ").

Indeed, with the possible exceptions of *Tess* and *Jude*, the so-called gloom of Hardy's writings is balanced by those Wessex folk who clown their way through life. True, some of the humour is grisly, and touches upon such unfashionable realities as " graves and worms and epitaphs" —but Granfer Cantle and William Leaf, " that weak, wambling man," are in the grand tradition of English humour, as also is that unhappy Cornishman whose aural affliction made it hard for him to believe that fish and chips were not perpetually being fried inside his head.

A hundred years are not, after all, a great time, even in the history of English literature: but it is probable that Hardy, like Horace, has built up a monument more lasting even than brass.

J. H. B. PEEL.

Marie Carmichael Stopes, D.Sc., Ph.D., in *John O'London's Weekly*, tells how Thomas Hardy " drank tea in the round stone tower of my little old Dorset lighthouse on Portland Bill. Hardy told me that having tea in that tower fulfilled one of the longings of his youth. The lighthouse is mentioned in his novel, *The Well Beloved* (all about the Isle of Slingers), but he had never been in it. There was no trace of ' Hardy the pessimist ' in him that day; he was Hardy, the eager, happy boy, the amused and sympathetic observer. How his eyes twinkled as he told me about the Prince's visit on the previous day, and how kindly the tone of his voice as he called him ' that poor boy ' ! Thomas Hardy in my lighthouse, in his own garden, dining at Max Gate, was always a stimulating, bright, swift, eager person. He reminded me of a red-breasted robin who, having caught a worm, looked brightly round sideways at one as though it would add to his pleasure if you ate it with him. Certainly one of the great prides of my life some years later was the moment when I had somewhat hesitated to accept another invitation to Max Gate, saying to his wife: ' But won't we be a bother?—he must be so busy,' and Mrs. Hardy answered: ' You are one of the few people who visit us who never bore him; most people bore him terribly, they *will* ask such silly questions.' He was hurt by some people as well as bored, and the chief hurts I encountered in him were connected with his poetry. He cared about it far more than he cared about his prose: he autographed his poems for me one day, saying: ' They are all that will live —all I *want* to live '."

## COMMUNION

A VOICE on a mountain
Defying height and cold.
No deeper mystery than this—
Stillness of air, of heart,
When memory and time
Are met in the abyss.
Here, as of old
No foot may climb:
Yet though we live apart
We are one again.
A voice on a mountain
Defying height and cold.

MARGUERITE EDGELOW.

## THE COMING ON OF WINTER, 1940

THERE came a chill wind down upon the morning
When I stepped first to-day into the sun,
And I think the night had not left off her sobbing
Or the dear God His bright paints left to run—
For there lay a gold mist the blue hills adorning
Savoured of sadness and a strong heart's throbbing,
Salt with the dry tears dropping one by one.

But come! stir up your fires, ye forest dwellers,
Burn the old beauty of a summer's dying,
And sing to the harvest with the apple-sellers
In the gay market towns their ripe wares crying.
And we'll have done with the old June way of sleeping
And the blue dance of flowers in an idle heat,
We'll look to the storm and set the bright flame leaping,
Heap on old leaves, new-severed wood and peat
That the smoke be fragrant and there be no weeping. . . .

O rather shall there laughter be in death
For God holds firm the hand held forth in faith,
Breathes in the beauty where the soul is proved
That man grows kinder and is kindlier loved.

RACHEL E. BOULTON.

## THE MEN AT THE TOP

SEE, your Lord has not delivered you they said
While yet the fields bled.
See the saints to whom you prayed
Were afraid.
At which they answered nought, remembering good days
When their children played
In the market place
Around the monument of deliverance.

They walked then as dumb men, ate as blind,
And when a foreman reviled them perchance,
Would look to the horizon
As if they saw nought between
That could demean.
But inwardly in their hearts was agony
Because they had failed the trust,
Lived on in ignominy,
Mocked by the foeman's heel,
Their children learning strange creeds,
Themselves impotent as kine,
Their own kine, those good breeds
That were their pride, with the vine.

And they searched in their hearts for a reason :
They had churched and neighboured,
Wived, and watched the season,
And they had laboured,
They had kept what their fathers kept
Which had given them the land
But the fruits of their hands were rot,
Their Lord God slept,
Took from them his hand,
And to a festrous lot,
Vanquished and disgraced,
Left them, the faithful.

So the days went by ;
None understanding, none hoping,

None even dreaming.
They heard the widow sigh
Without finding a word's comfort.
The sun was still gleaming
As of old
Warm and gold
In the land of good promise,
But their hearts were not young

As always they had been
After harvest.
They went soft, and in mourning,
While over the hills
That had cradled joy
But yesters gone
New days came
And swept away,
Stars shone,
Moons went,
All was the same
But these three :
Liberty, equality and fraternity.

This was the traitor's gift
Of them
That in their plenty were ambitious,
Reaching for power
Not in brotherhood
But as men devoid of shame,
Who took the divine blood
And hawked it for a sop,
Who built a thousand monuments
On which dogs pissed,
But valued before their own countrymen
Their dividends.
Judas ! how they kissed !
Judas ! how they saved !
The men at the top !

EDWARD KENYON.

*THREE POEMS FROM HARROW:*

## SAPPHIC ODE TO OLD AGE

LAST thou art and longest of all our evils,
Unforeseen, incurable anguish, Old Age.
Death alone relieves us of thee, Oppressor
Sent as his herald.

Him we welcome, whom we besought to help us;
Yet for long thou holdest his place, usurping;
Smoothest skin grows wrinkled, and darkest tresses
Fade to a pale grey;

Supplest muscles stiffen, and brightest eyes cloud,
Sunken bloodshot into the sockets; ears hear
Only young men sneering at what we rumour,
Older, severer.

All our loves desert us, and all desire too
Dies, reproaching bitterly faithless women;
Life has left the prison of flesh for ever;
Yet must the soul stay

Caged about with bones, and with nerves to chain her,
—Nerves that strain and bones that are aching always;
Yet we dare not break them asunder, easy
Though such release were.

Old we dream of youth with a sharp repentance,
Pained, as one who, waking beside his love, sees
Night departing, night that he found delightful,
Drowned in the morning.

Even thus, Old Age, is thy burden hateful;
Thus we fear thee more than the Hell that follows.
Save us, Death, from lingering Winter,—smite us
Now, in our Springtime.

J. G. ROYDE-SMITH.

## SUSPENSE

HOW strained the court, how grave the judge's face,
When, after toilsome tussle of the tongue,
With many a falter, many a phrase full-flung,
The jury, long-absented, took its place.
Then, then, oh then the prisoner prayed for grace
From God, and gazed with awe upon the crowd,
All murmuring, muttering, voicing thoughts aloud;
His own heart fluttering seemed to halt a space.

And, as the foreman rose to take his stand,
In his suspense the prisoner appeared to hear
A voice, mist-cleaving, thus to understand
The pounding of his brain, a voice not grand,
Not that of jury, but the grinding sneer
Of Man's first, last and greatest enemy, Fear.

ROGNVALD GUNN.

## AN UNWANTED QUARREL

OUT into the cold twilight
In the old town,
When day ends slowly,
And the grey darkness comes down,
And my thoughts are behind me,
There, where we had to part,
And the only motion in the stillness
Is the cold wind in my heart.
This was no love that is lost to me
Behind that closing door,
Just a kind face that I knew well,
And shall know no more.
For a cloud lies between us
From a few words spoken—
Only a few, scarcely heard,
But the bond was broken.
A thin ray of lamplight
Still shines through the crack,
But the door swings too and shuts tight.
I cannot go back.

A. G. WILSON

# THE POETRY OF WILFRED OWEN

(1893–1918)

*Northward, incessantly, the flickering of gunnery rumbles,*
*Far-off, like a dull rumour of some other war.*
*What are we doing here?*

SO wrote Owen, during the winter of 1916–1917. To-day, when the only logic that guides us in "Chance's strange arithmetic," when the bravest among us is often bound to feel brittle with apprehension, and the life of most of us is bounded by gun-fire, these lines seem very close. This great poet and messenger can perfectly express and shape our sufferings and perhaps alleviate the dark sense of doom. To read his poems now is almost like listening to the experiences of some friend who has come back from some far away country.

In spite of his vivid and individual genius Owen seems to have been shamefully neglected. He is little spoken of, does not appear on many bookshelves, is seldom discussed as a possible influence on modern poetry. It is as though, even in death, he has continued in that isolation of which he was so keenly aware as an adolescent:

> I may read even Keats and still I am alone among
> the Unseen Voices.

During his life he was little publicised. He lived such a short time, and just as he was beginning to receive recognition and respect he was killed. Possibly the immediate post-war public had little desire to read and re-live the feelings and incidents described by Owen. People were engrossed in a hectic search for pleasure and raucous diversion. They wanted to get away from themselves, from their memories of the past four years of pain. The mind had many wounds that would only heal by forgetting the weapons that had inflicted them. If at all it is during this war that Owen will take his rightful place among the great English poets. Now we feel the need of comfort, the need to know that we are not alone in this horrible nightmare, that there has been someone sane and brave enough to revile such a state of affairs. And we are willing and

sensitive to receive that message coming from a period in history as dark and thwarted as that in which we are now living.

Owen was killed in action a few days before the Armistice. He was just twenty-five. At that age such maturity of expression and thought as his, is rare. War broke out when he was still very impressionable and flirting with various ideas. It strengthened and nurtured him more than anything else could have done. At an age when many writers are still almost morbidly introspective, engrossed with sex and symbolism, experimenting with subtle shades of emotion, Owen had already come to a full understanding of himself. He set himself a life task and was prepared to carry it out as best he could. And, having accepted himself as an integrate personality, he was able to concentrate on *other* people, and the emotions that directed *their* lives. More than anything else Owen loved people. He had broken away from the happy hopeful Georgians with their sensuous delight in life, their joy in the beautiful and the romantic, their love of nature. For Owen it was different—let nature enter the picture, but only as a background for men.

The war poets were the fore-runners of the modern school of realism, working itself out in surrealism. And, with the possible exception of Siegfried Sassoon whom the war turned into a satirist, Owen stands out as the greatest. To the generation of poets who came after, he gave a harsh realism, tempered with pathos, an objectivity of observation and a powerful, almost terrible, feeling for the sufferings of men, concentrated in an exposure of the methods of modern warfare. He did not wish to express his own personal reactions to the war : there were many minor poets engaged on that job. He wanted to tell of the tragedy of masses of men, doomed to be slaughtered in millions. In none of his poems is there the slightest hint of self-pity, only an intense pity for others, a passionate outburst against injustice and perversion.

It has been said of him that he wrote excellent propaganda for the cause of Pacifism, perhaps. But the humanity of

Owen was far more profound than that of the pacifist who thought that, by withdrawing himself from the conflict into self-imposed isolation, he could alter the trend of world events. And his socialism was more genuine than that voiced by the pretentious fellows parading the streets in their red shirts, completely divorced from working-class reality. If they had experienced real poverty and real struggles they wouldn't have spoken of them so glibly. Owen thought deeper, saw clearer. His philanthropy was of the heart and the body, not merely of the mind. He loathed war and destruction. His reading of the war as an abstract subject shows with what clarity he saw the crass stupidity of the European conflict.

> War broke. And now the winter of the world
> With perishing great darkness closes in.
> The cyclone of the pressure on Berlin
> Is over all the width of Europe whirled
> Rending the sails of progress. Rent or furled
> Are art's ensigns. Verse moans. Love's wines thin.
> The grains of earth's great autumn rots, down-hurled.
>
> For after Spring had bloomed in early Greece,
> And summer blazed to perfect strength in Rome
> There fell a slow grand age, a harvest-home,
> Quietly ripening, rich with all increase.
>
> But now the exigent winter, and the need
> Of sowings for new spring and flesh for seed.

And how he cried out against it ! But the old men at home heard only the faintest echo of it through their mummy-cases—if they heard at all. Yet he was eager to sacrifice himself : not as a blind patriot, but in order to serve and help the people, now herded into the Army, with whom he felt indissolubly united, although recognizing his inevitable isolation as a poet. He passionately desired to express, through his writing, their dumb agony, endeavouring to impress upon those back in England, who so innocently mouthed the platitude of " dulce et decorum est pro patria mori," the vileness of the slaughter-house into which the young men were driven.

He wrote with hatred of the old old grey men, the

inhabitants of musty tombs, of the fat bugs that fed on the blood of boys. He saw through their glory speeches and their ribbons.

> So Abram rose, and clave the wood and went,
> And took the fire with him, and a knife.
> And as they sojourned both of them together,
> Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,
> Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
> But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?
> Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps
> And builded parapets and trenches there,
> And stretchèd forth the knife to slay his son.
> When lo! an angel called him out of heaven
> Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
> Neither do anything to him. Behold,
> A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
> Offer the ram of pride instead of him.
> But the old man would not do so, but slew his son,—
> And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

And he wrote with sympathy and tenderness of the doomed youth of Europe (perhaps forgetting that he was one of them), thrown as pawns of capital and a worn-out system into this mad game of murder.

> What passing bells for these who die as cattle?
> Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
> Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
> Can patter out their hasty orisons.
> No mockeries for them from prayers or bells,
> Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
> The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
> And bugles calling for them from sad shires.
>
> What candles may be held to speed them all?
> Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
> Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
> The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
> Their flowers the tenderness of silent minds,
> And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

But, the conscious spectator and victim of so much unhappiness, he never allows a word of self-pity or of desire for escape to enter any of his poems. He will not, he cannot, rest until he has accomplished what he set out to do.

Not this week nor this month dare I lie down
In languor under lime trees or smooth smile.
Love must not kiss my face pale that is brown.

That was when he came on leave. And there is always the thought of his work (one might almost say "mission" if it were not such a misinterpreted word) present in his consciousness. It was almost as though he knew he was going to die young, but was determined to cheat death as long as possible, and achieve as much as he could before he was killed. During the summer leave of 1918 he wrote:

Then sometimes late at night my window bumps
From gunnery-practice, till my small heart thumps
And listens for the shell-shrieks and the crumps,
But that's not all.

For leaning out last midnight on my sill
I heard the sighs of men, that have no skill
To speak of their distress, no, nor the will!
A voice I know. And I must go.

He went. In November of the same year, when helping his men to bridge a canal in face of intense machine-gun and artillery fire, he was killed. He is remembered as having moved about among his men, encouraging them, patting them on the back with a "Well done—you're doing splendidly."

He was no conscious moralist, no petty agitator—for he spoke simple truths. Perhaps to him, more than to most artists, can Ernst Toller's words be applied—"The artist's business is not to prove theses, but to throw light upon human conduct." Nor was he completely cynical and despairing. In one of his poems—"The Next War"—he writes with hope of the time

. . . when each proud fighter brags
He wars on Death—for Life; not men—for flags.

But his genius lies not only in the treatment of his subject-matter, his love for men, his expression of profundities. He had a wide understanding of the English language, and a remarkable skill with words. He was an enthusiast in the art of poetry, always eager to experiment with new forms in an endeavour to find the one that would

best convey to the reader what he had to tell. The problem of literary form absorbed him.

His earliest and strongest influence was Keats, to whom he was to remain faithful until Sassoon shaped and concentrated him, setting him on the path he was to follow. It is to Keats that he owes his richness of language, the powerful realities of phrase contrasted with delicacy, and passages of unearthly imagination.

But it is to himself alone that he owes the lovely music of his poetry, which is perhaps the chief characteristic of his technique,—a music that is always present, simple and melodious. He used to tell his friends that he had to be a poet because he couldn't be a musician!

> All things have been as music to my listening:

he begins, and then follows a long list, almost as long as Rupert Brooke's detailed account of the things he loved! And again—

> I have been urged by earnest violins
> And drunk their mellow sorrows to the slake
> Of all my sorrows and my thirsting sins.
> My heart has beaten for a brave drum's sake.
> Huge chords have wrought me might: I have pondered
> Over the curse of this chaotic world,
> With low lost winds that maundered as they wandered.

His poems are full of different rhythms, rhyme, assonance and onomatopoeia. They appeal more to the ear and the feelings than to the intellect. That is why they are so vivid. Like Keats, he is essentially sensuous and warm. But after reading him you never feel that you have eaten too many sweet cakes! His symbolism is simple! his poetry can be read as it stands, with no feeling of mental bewilderment. No explanatory notes are needed. On the rare occasions when he allowed himself a rest from his "pleading" he would write little poems of a delicious humour, such as the one he called "Beauty."

> The beautiful, the fair, the elegant,
> Is that which pleases us, says Kant,
> Without a thought of interest or advantage.
>
> I used to watch men when they spoke of beauty
> And measure their enthusiasm. One,

An old man, seeing a setting sun
Praised it with a certain sense of duty
To the calm evening and his time of life.
I know another man that never says a Beauty
But of a horse;

Men seldom speak of beauty, beauty as such,
Not even lovers think about it much.
Women of course consider it for hours
In mirrors.

Perhaps strongest of all emotions he can express profound horror. This is particularly illustrated by his grim poem—"The Show"—that begins "My soul looked down from a vague height with Death," and ends with the terse lines

And Death fell with me, like a deepening moan.
And He, picking a manner of worm which half had hid
Its bruises in the earth, but crawled no further,
Showed me its feet, the feet of many men,
And the fresh-severed head of it, my head.

Here you can feel clearly the poet's sense of nightmarish horror at this no-man's existence! and in these lines you can almost hear the gas-poisoned wretch coughing out his life

And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Bitter as the cud
Of vile incurable sores on innocent tongues;

Yet always with his sense of the horrible and the brutal is coupled an exquisite tenderness and beauty of phrase. Take for example such lovely lines as

. . . Through the park
Voices of boys rang saddening like a hymn,
Voices of play and pleasures after day,
Till gathering sleep had mothered them from him,

and the quiet ending of "Asleep":

Whether his deeper sleep lie shaded by the shaking
Of great wings, and the thoughts that hung the stars,
High-pillowed on calm pillows of God's making
Above these clouds, these rains, these sheets of lead,
And these winds' scimitars;

. . . Or whether yet his thin and sodden head
Confuses more and more with the low mould,
His hair being one with the grey grass
And finished fields of autumns that are old . . .
Who knows? Who hopes? Who troubles? Let it pass!
He sleeps. He sleeps less tremulous, less cold,
Than we who must awake, and waking, say Alas!

Although there may be occasional lapses in the high standard of his technical perfection, he is rigorous in his treatment of clichés. They are cut right out.

The peak of his work is probably reached in his description of soldiers, where there is always a subtle blending of pure poetry and the rough expressive talk of the Tommy. His use of dialogue is most able. And, like A. E. Housman, he resurrects the importance of friendship which had for long been smothered in the intense and prolific outpouring of love poems. Love had been plugged to a sickening degree. Owen raised friendship to its proper place among other sentiments. He has a simple and genuine affection for his fellow-soldiers:

I have made fellowships . . .
Untold of happy lovers in old song.
For love is not the binding of fair lips
With the soft silk of eyes that look and long,

. . . .

. . . except you share
With them in hell the sorrowful dark of hell,
Whose world is but the trembling of a flare
And heaven but as the highway for a shell.

You shall not hear their mirth:
You shall not come to think them well content
By any jest of mine. These men are worth
Your tears. You are not worth their merriment.

But when necessary he can be slashing in his hatred:

But cursed are dullards whom no cannon stuns,
That they should be as stones;
Wretched are they, and mean
With paucity that never was simplicity.

And in the well-known "Strange Meeting," which is a masterpiece of assonance, his ideals and his creed are spoken by the enemy he killed. The enemy he met in hell.

. . . I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world,
Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
But mocks the steady running of the hour,
And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.
For by my glee might many men have laughed,
And of my weeping something had been left
Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity was distilled.
Now men will go content with what we spoiled.
Or discontent boil bloody and be spilled.
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress,
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.
Courage was mine, and I had mystery,
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery;
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.
Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels
I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,
Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.
I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.
Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.

Had he lived? Doubtless he would have continued to plead for the down-trodden unsuccessful masses of people, whose dumbness and inability to live fully he felt with the whole strength of his sensitivity.

Yet in spite of his hope, of his faith in human nature, he is conscious of hurling all his forces against a stone wall. It was a magnificent battle that he fought. Perhaps it was better that he died young. He did not see that he had lost the fight. He did not see that he had only scraped a little dust off the rock of human callousness and complacency. And other writers did not come to his support as they might have done. For a little while, perhaps, but they soon returned to their subjective soul-questioning verses. With amassed experience and observation Owen would perhaps have employed his penetration and awareness for prophetic poetry. His prophesies would not have been at all popular. But whatever might have materialized Owen would never have laid down his pen and stagnated.

Emotion and spontaneity are often laughed at nowadays.

Everything has to be mental, intellectual, clever. This may be because, being bleating sheep, we have no real emotions to express. And, with such self-consciousness, spontaneity is an impossibility. This war may loosen some of the bonds that enslave us so miserably within our empty egos. There are already signs of a movement towards a simpler and more fundamental life, away from all the blah-blah moralizing " what should be " to the essential " what is." English poetry has need of a good storm of emotion to blow away all the weary disillusion and decay of many dead, springless winters. Perhaps another Owen will emerge from this war to plead for humanity : and this time he may be spared to continue his pleadings and his work during the years of peace. Unless humanity is at last learning to plead for itself.

PATRICIA LEDWARD.

## NIGHT BOMBER

PROUD of his wings,
He storms the skies,
Careless of danger,
His youthful blood,
His dauntless eyes,
To fear a stranger.

Above the clouds,
Among the stars,
In droning flight,
His silver monster,
Born of wars,
A hawk of night.

So might a God,
If drained of pity,
And watching so,
Behold the doomed,
The darkened city,
Asleep below.

He moves his hand,
His thought unspoken,
The wind crying—
And on the pavement,
Crushed and broken,
A child is dying.

W. R. LATHAM.

## EPITAPH FOR A BRAVE SOLDIER

HIM let men praise beside whose honoured grave
Duty, a Spartan mother to the brave,
Stands half-repentant of the part she played
Who sent to death a spirit unafraid.
Him let men praise who rather chose to be
Nameless in death than known in infamy.

J.E.M.

# TIMELESSNESS AND TYROS

THE vendetta between intellect and imagination, between the cerebral as against the intuitive, in the matter of which shall govern his activities and beliefs, has existed since man began to think. Initially the line of demarcation was ill-defined, and the transition from one province to the other for the most part subconscious and automatic.

In poetry, for example, Donne crossed and recrossed this intangible frontier untrammelled by fashion's demand for a literary visa; so, in a later century, Arnold found he could swing from the romantic and visionary " Scholar Gipsy " to the philosophic mind-play of his " Empedocles," both of which found a ready and sympathetic audience. As for Shakespeare, the supreme master, he strode like a colossus across the whole lettered globe.

During the last three decades or so the position has materially altered. Cliques and factions have attempted, and still attempt to govern artistic taste, be it in literature, music, painting or sculpture, each peevishly deriding the viewpoint of the other, and the upshot has been a chaos of conflicting and often bewildering surface currents which have tended to obscure the undertow of tradition and progress.

Fortunately, indifferent to all the fuss and noisy flutter of the " cult-fans," certain contemporary craftsmen have refused to be side-tracked, and with the integrity of the genuine artist, have continued to put forth truly creative work. They go inflexibly upon their way, which follows in the long tradition of their respective arts. Not for them the ephemeral vogue, the striving after novelty and the worthless applause of sycophantic charlatans.

One such is Edmund Blunden, whose latest volume (*Poems*, 1930–1940, Macmillan, 10s. 6d.) has just been published. Here we have a poet whose reputation, slowly but surely built up upon a solid foundation of merit over a period of many years, is never likely to suffer undignified eclipse. This handsomely produced book shows his touch to be as sure and his apperception as keen as ever, while a

maturer vision seems to pervade and add a pleasing mellowness to his poems.

Like Sassoon, his mind has been deeply scored by experiences during the last war; but, whereas the former poet has resorted in the main to the acid barb of satire, Blunden's muse is imbued with patience, and warmed by the kindly glow of compassion and human understanding.

One would like to quote freely from these thoughtful poems, but not only will space not permit, but the best of them are so carefully wrought that to do so would be like chipping sections from a cut and polished stone: the beauty of form and content would be destroyed. We cannot do better than to send the discerning poetry-lover to the book itself in the sure knowledge that he will find something to delight him, and much to make him meditate and ponder.

In Mr. Richard Eberhart's latest volume of verse (*Song and Idea*, Chatto and Windus, 6s.) the conflict between argument and impression has patently resulted in a victory for the grey cells. Here is both ratiocination and invention, analysis and introspection, wedded withal to a lively technical skill; but somehow the seed of inspiration has been allowed to turn sterile. Treated purely and simply as essays in fanciful reporting Mr. Eberhart's verses stimulate, but one misses the authentic pipe and wing-beat of the songster.

There is nothing, perhaps, that makes for more acute discomfort in the reader than the "candour" of an unsubtle poet when he commits his intimacies to print. In a slight volume entitled *The White Patrol* (Williams and Norgate, 2s. 6d.), which presents us with a selection of verse by the late Mr. David Morrison-Jacob, we are treated to this questionable privilege. Miss Gordon (*Incidentally*, Stockwell) offers us a tatterdemalion of derivative verse, with here and there a spark of poetic insight. But we suspect that a too lavish employment of well-thumbed adjectives betrays the tyro.

On the other hand, in the unhackneyed verse of Mr. Edmonds (*Versailles Summer*, by E. Wykeham Edmonds,

Williams and Norgate, 2s. 6d.) the reader is constantly arrested by a salutary originality of approach. Whereas his present, and first volume, must be regarded rather as a promise than a fulfilment, the future of this poet is to be watched; for when he has learned to fuse the elements of satirical observation and imaginative interpretation, which he tacitly admits in a short Preface to be still in conflict, and to canalize the springs of his creative impulse, we may expect him to produce some notable verse. Such poems as "John Nash Landscape" and "Michaelmas" point the way.

The admirable series of "RESURGAM" YOUNGER POETS (Favil Press) has already been commended in *The Poetry Review*. Now that the first three broadsheets have had time to circulate, and others are promised at an early date, it will not be out of place to consider the poems that have appeared.

The primary virtue of the poems in general is that they do not require a course of mental gymnastics to understand their meaning; nor have the writers lost sight of the fact that verbal felicity is one of the essential attributes of a good poem.

Peter Baker, who is also the Editor of the series, starts the ball rolling with *The Beggar's Lute*: Twenty-One Poems written under the Impact of War. Of these the poem titled "I Lay My Sword . . ." is probably the most finished. He should beware of being led into extravagances of metaphor such as "While yesterday a bleeding finger could grey-tinge the ruby cheek," which sadly mars an otherwise effective poem.

The danger in all "uncomplicated" poetry is its tendency to slide back into the stereotyped and commonplace: conscious efforts to avoid this pitfall tend to lead to the opposite extreme of forced effects. Mr. Baker's "Disillusionment" aptly sums up a young poet-soldier's reactions to a war-wracked world.

Miss Leward's (No. 2: *Over the Edge*) are emotional verses, some of them no more than fragments. If we state that they could not have been written by a man, this is not meant in any disparaging sense. "Across the Serpentine

with a Chinese Portrait" has all the simplicity and atmosphere of a Chinese poem. Some are wistful and sentimental; but they betray a sensitive nature. "The Girls They Leave Behind" is a poem of considerable power and insight.

Bertram Warr, who contributes No. 3 (*Yet a Little Onwards*) is the least traditional of the trio. His philosophy is admirably summed up in his Introduction, though less satisfactorily expressed in the poems themselves, which at their worst read like paraphrases of the Auden "school." There is little doubt that his is a mind that feels constrained to give expression to its clamorous emotions, and on occasion his powers of invention and construction are equal to the task. Mr. Warr's best is very good, as evidenced in the opening sections of "Working Class." We may add that these excellently printed broadsheets cost only 1s., and offer value for money in a world of cultural eclipse and paper shortage.

E. Curt Peters.

## CONTEMPORARY VIEWS ON GREAT POETS

*Fifteen Poets* (Oxford University Press, 6s.) offers a characteristic selection of the work of our standard poets with introductions to each of about half-a-dozen pages by present-day critics. Perhaps the most fitting of these is Edmund Blunden's on Shelley, whose "Skylark" is "the sportive balloon-flying of one who does not really wish to catch his lark," and who in his last long poem, "The Triumph of Time," was "entering upon a new chapter of intellectual astuteness . . . he was beginning to live, and to cease to be 'at war with life' . . . a faultless ease was stealing upon his poetry." W. H. Auden considers the poetic gift so unstable and accidental as to be dependent on material circumstances. "Had Byron's foot been cured by modern surgery, or had his parents got on with each other, he would never have written a line." Mr. Auden concludes: "Byron was not really odd like Wordsworth: his experiences were those of the ordinary man. He had no unusual emotional or intellectual vision, and his distinctive contribution to English poetry was to be, not the defiant thunder of the rebel angel but the speaking voice of the tolerant man-about-town."

Mr. H. Charlton is very downright on Robert Browning, "paradoxically the most original and the most representative poet of the nineteenth century. In his struggle to find the technique which would 'all-express' him he defied more poetic conventions and invented

more new forms than did any of his contemporaries. . . . Yet the strains he was contriving were more distinctly the voice of his time than were the less heterodox melodies of his fellow poets. He is the prophet of Victorian [*sic*] individualism. . . . his strongest conviction was a belief in the sanctity of the individual . . . truth is a record of the infinitude of ways in which man has sought God . . . and the poet as historian of the soul's journeyings must seize the crucial turning-points peculiar to each man's pilgrimage. . . . His literary technique is but a means to an end. He must find a mode of expression and a style of communication which will reflect the facets of experience in true focus, catching every angle and every shade in their precise relationships to the whole spiritual pattern as he himself sees it. Hence Browning's many diversions from conventional poetic practice, his frequent hazards in metre and imagery and vocabulary. . . . Browning's great discovery was the dramatic lyric and monologue. It was an instrument which reflected life just as his poetic vision took it to be. It mirrored the individual finding his place in his universe. It depicted a situation in which soul was made manifest through circumstances." And " because Browning sees living in all its manifestations as a seeking after God, his poems are love poems or art poems or religious poems."

Humbert Wolfe's essay on Tennyson dates the volume as being in preparation in ante-war days: it also reflects the influence of the Tennysonian twilight. Mr. Wolfe considered that although not yet half a century since Tennyson died, " the times in which we live are so impossibly remote from his that it is possible to consider him as calmly as though he were an Elizabethan," yet many of his contemporaries linger on, presumably fossilized dotards whose opinions and prejudices and experiences are valueless. Tennyson himself, " as a thinker could only summarize. He never in thought was more than a reflection, and he attempted to disguise the fact that he was a mirror by burnishing its surface continually." Yet Mr. Wolfe concluded " that Tennyson as a lyric poet, pure and simple, is among the first in the language " although he " cannot live with Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley and Browning."

Of Matthew Arnold, to whom more pages are allotted than are occupied by any of the other fourteen, excepting Chaucer, and that only by reason of the length rather than the number of his pieces, Prof. Garrod says his " imagination was haunted by the idea of the Great Poems," the " cognizable lineaments of which are found in ' Sohrab and Rustum.' No other poem of the age, perhaps no other poem from any age of our poetry, has the same serenity and severity of beauty. For a composition equally pure and noble in all its parts we must go where Matthew Arnold went—to the Greeks," yet, Mr. Garrod declares, " he had no wish to be great in that department of poetry in which he is, in truth, the greatest of our poets, the department of elegy and reflections."

Mr. F. L. Lucas deals very happily with Wordsworth, " one of the essential things about whom is his happiness," and " he was himself aware of it." He did not owe it to material prosperity or success—by thirty he " had earned only £10, then earned no more till sixty-five, while if reviews could kill . . . But he realized betimes how much the cities of our modern civilization are Cities of Destruction; he fled with all the fervour of Bunyan's Pilgrim, from the snares of material ' progress.' " In his return to Nature, he " never grew morbid like Rousseau or animal like D. H. Lawrence. . . . So to-day his is still a living voice, crying in the wilderness its prophetic protest, not only against the unhealthiness of all over-civilization but also against the drab brutality of the machine-world and of the mass-state. . . . He wrote no poem more characteristic than *Resolution and Independence*. as one who vindicates unceasingly the freedom of soul not only of Shakespeare and Milton, but even of leech-gatherers and old shepherds like Michael : the individual worth, to the eye of vision, of even the meanest flower, even the commonest clod. . . . He never renounced his conviction that it is only states of mind and of feeling that really matter ; not things, nor machinery, nor even books. This is the true Wordsworth who has ministered to so many minds diseased. . . . the Wordsworth who was happy, . . . intoxicated not with wine but with brook water."

Mr. Louis MacNeice characteristically analyses Keats, who " never moved out of the Chamber of Maiden-thought : till his death he was still in a mist. . . . It would be a great mistake to belittle any poet's work because it is founded on self-pity, nostalgia, or feelings of frustration in general. Poetry is *making*, and we must consider what things of positive value a poet can make, starting from his own negations. Keats in life could not have the world he wanted : he tried to build up a world in poetry. The value of such a world depends upon how egocentric its author is or rather, perhaps, upon how far he is a man like other men. Keats we might think at first sight very egocentric, but we then should have to remember that Keats was not a very peculiar person and that therefore his egocentricity, whatever its degree, would not necessarily isolate him from his fellows." Mr. MacNeice sums up Keats as a " sensuous mystic," but " his logical progress, if he had not died, was towards more realism and less gules."

We leave the other sympathetic introductions (which do not interfere with the independent reading of the following selections) to our readers, who will appreciate these fifteen contemporary judgments and be able to compare them with what earlier critics have written about the work and reputation of fifteen masters of English poetry.

In *The Gallows-Cross* (Dent, 2s. 6d.) Mr. Herbert Palmer presents in a small volume what he aptly designates as " Songs and Verse for the Times," which, it is evident, have gushed from the crucible of an

outraged consciousness, their seething contents not having been given any prepared mould into which to set. The result is that they have congealed into somewhat fantastic shapes that must satisfy the veteran's modernist critics. He has out-Heroded Herod, and we who know a calmer, precise Palmer, to whom however righteous indignation has never been alien, this almost savage ebullience may cause a little surprise. The old literary crusader sustains his long pilgrimage with fiery rhetoric. He does not err in the conventional direction of understatement and world-weariness but shows in various ways, literal and spiritual, that Milton still survives.

## POETS AND PATRIOTISM

MR. FLEMING REPLIES TO MR. WALLER.

This debate between Mr. John Waller and myself has arisen because he affirmed that " the great poet is best serving his cause by writing " and accordingly defended the flight, to America and safety, of certain writers. (One or two have, I understand, sneaked back, but whether they were compelled by law or by conscience I do not know.) And it appeared that the " great " poet whom Mr. Waller had in mind was Mr. H. W. Auden.

Now, I want to be quite fair. I admit that to me Mr. Auden is a respectable poetaster who, amid much turgidity and common-place and doggerel, now and again shows a touch of the true poet. But I must also admit that poets like Masefield, Binyon, De la Mare, awarded him the King's Gold Medal, though, of course, this still leaves him an immeasurable distance below the acknowledged great. In defence of his award of this crown of greatness to Auden, Mr. Waller instances some undeniably great poets who met with adverse criticism. I forget the technical name of the logical fallacy into which Mr. Waller has fallen, but it is obvious. Thus he trots out once more that very stale old argument that because the *Quarterly* (he might have added *Blackwood*, if he had known) condemned Keats, therefore a condemned poet of to-day—say—Auden, etc., etc. He evidently does not know that when that condemnation was issued, the poems which make us rank Keats high among the immortals, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, the great Odes, etc., had not been written.

He points out, quite truly, that some other great poets have been derided by some of their contemporaries, e.g. Wordsworth. He has perhaps never read that famous parody (incidentally a piece of true criticism) written half a century ago.

" Two voices, are there : one is of the deep . . .
And one is of a blind, old, silly sheep
That bleats that grass is green and water wet,
And, Wordsworth, both are thine."

Other poets have been guilty of occasional lapses. Is not the couplet

" And when they buried him the little port
Had seldom seen a costlier funeral "

typical of Auden's too frequent platitudinous bathos ?

I am sorry for Mr. Waller to whom the name " Dunkirk " brings no thrill of pride. He must be in a very lonely and unimaginative little minority. To him it means only failure and defeat. Has he ever heard of Thermopylae ? Or of Corunna ? Let me recommend him to read a ballad called " The Revenge," written some years ago by a person named Tennyson, who was read a good deal in his day, and, in fact, though it may sound blasphemous, probably finds to-day many more readers than does Auden, with whom, of course, he is not to be named in the same breath. (To prevent misunderstanding, let me adopt the safeguard used by the late Artemus Ward, and add " N.B. This is sarkasum, a goak ".)

Before I leave this matter of Dunkirk, let me reply to Mr. Waller's question. He asks : " if it is the escape that Mr. Fleming celebrates, why the sneers at Auden ? " Does Mr. Waller really believe and allege that Auden, in escaping to America, had to face untold hardships, that he heroically braved incredible dangers, and that from moment to moment he was ready to lay down his life to assist a comrade in arms ? For if not, then Mr. Waller's challenge to me falls rather flat. If you decide to talk through your hat, it is advisable to select one that will stand it.

Mr. Waller misses the point of my illustration that Shakespeare, at twenty-four, might have been press-ganged on to one of Drake's ships to fight the Spanish Armada. All that Mr. Waller can see is the obvious fact that the world might thereby have lost priceless things that were not yet born.

Logic, I fear, does not seem to be Mr. Waller's strong suit. He does not see that to avoid all risk that some future Shakespeare (Shakespeare at twenty-four had most certainly not proved that he was indispensably great) might have to fight, there must be a law that no man is to be liable for military service until he is so old that nothing in the way of great poetry can be expected from him.

Mr. Waller quotes two passages from the magazine *Kingdom Come*, which he started at the outbreak of the present war. One is a poem by Clifford Dyment which apparently means that some writers warned us about something unspecified and then fled to safety and now do not like being jeered at as cowardly cravens. Their message, it appears, was " *Take care*," and this they interpreted as " Take care of Number One." Do Mr. Dyment and Mr. Waller mean, or do they not mean, that this country should not now be resisting the Nazis ? May the readers of this REVIEW have a plain, blunt answer, without evasion ?

Mr. Waller's own contribution to his magazine affirms that " the writer or artist who has found himself . . . is right to eschew the army, to flee if necessary to a safe haven." But who is to decide whether this writer or artist is truly one of the geniuses who may

occur once or twice in a century, or whether (as is vastly more probable by the law of averages) he is merely a conceited fool, or at best, a mediocrity, puffed out with self-importance ?

And let us once again be logical, however much we upset Mr. Waller's argument. If this writer or artist is to be freed from the danger of having to fight for his country, he must be also carefully watched to see that he himself does not injure his health. No Byronic adventures, no Swinburnian orgies for him ! Each of these chosen vessels must be put in the charge of a stern Watts-Dunton. There will be a life-long régime of early to bed, frugal diet, and no alcohol beyond the daily pint of beer which Watts-Dunton conceded to Swinburne. And, of course, the notorious dangers of female society must be rigorously forbidden.

Mr. Waller, I fear, will not be popular with young poets and artists. But what a nuisance logic is !

Mr. Waller makes much of the fact that he himself has not fled to America. Let me " call his bluff." What chance would a man who is still an undergraduate, and presumably not yet qualified in any profession, have of getting past the immigration inspectors on Ellis Island ?

In defending Auden for having run away Mr. Waller lets the cat out of the bag, and the cat is seen to have a cloven hoof. Auden is not prepared to fight the Nazi tyranny. But he is willing to take part in " the people's war." What that means is not explained, but it is something most certainly not desired by the overwhelming majority of the people of this country. The microscopic handful of fanatics, fools, and crazy cranks who are of his way of thinking are objects of derision and contempt, as was shown by the universal public approval of the recent suppression of their journal.

I warned readers that the passage from Auden's *Spain* containing the lines

" To-morrow, perhaps, the future,
To-morrow for the young the poets exploding like bombs "

might be taken as a test of the lack or possession of a sense of humour. Mr. Waller tells us that he admires the second line and suggests jocularly that I would like to have certain " modern " poets dropped over Berlin. I will answer him in his own vein. All parties in the present conflict have, so far, mutually refrained from the use of—*gas*.

Perhaps later on I may have the pleasure of meeting Mr. Waller in more congenial circumstances, by which time, as the great Huxley said, any heat produced by our blows will have been dissipated in accordance with natural law.

Athenaeum Club. EDWARD VANDERMERE FLEMING.

(*To the Editor*, THE POETRY REVIEW)

SIR,—On a cold and gusty afternoon, when the wind beats wildly against this house, and the voices of the sentries reach me spasmodically

like the watch at Elsinore, or the harping of Cawdor's conscience, I quite casually opened your Nov.-Dec. number at a letter signed Edward Vandermere Fleming.

A letter, did I say? I should rather have termed it an utterance; for in those two pages lies all the wisdom of experience—too profound, perhaps, for colour, too serious for humour, too self-assured for delicacy, at times, I fancy, too angry for empty compliment. There is, besides, something so majestically unanswerable, so irrefutable, so *right*; and all strongly reminiscent of those rich carpets, leather-upholstered chairs, elderly servants and expanding watch-chains of the club from which it is addressed. It emphasizes, not so much the degeneration of respectability, as the respectability of degeneration. For respectability rather than brilliance is the key-note of this letter and, as a very typical member of a graceless age, I shall be the last to cavil at a virtue beyond my own accomplishment.

May we take the first paragraph, for instance? There is about this writing an elderly charm, a tranquil and serene *je ne sais quoi*, a leisured dignity remote indeed from the hard realities of the moment. It is a voice speaking away back in the mists of memory, solemn, assured and infinitely distant. That the argument is rarely to the point hardly seems to matter. That the possibility of Shakespeare being lost to the brutalities of the Elizabethan navy; his high talent devoted to the invention of bawdy ditties (such as sailors love), his life, perhaps, early sacrificed to piracy and Elizabeth, appears revolting is undeniable. Almost it persuades us that Mr. Waller might have been right in demanding for poets a reasonable protection. But what matter? The flowing periods continue, and only the impious will interrupt to examine the sense.

*Mr. Auden ! ! !* (I quote.) How clearly Mr. Fleming conveys to us his derision. In two words, with no epithet, no word of unkindness, and yet what a world of distaste and condemnation is here.

For the matter? There are few points raised which Mr. Fleming does not himself answer. The main point of contention he hardly touches. Would Mr. Fleming not, perhaps, agree that the loss of a Keats is more than the loss of a single soldier? Might he perhaps, and in spite of my years, agree that the loss of a writer who might even conceivably give us an Ode to the Nightingale, or a Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, would be a great disaster? Could we not agree that Mr. Auden would probably make a poor soldier, whereas there are some of us immature enough yet to admire him as a poet?

Mr. Fleming generously remains in bombarded London. Mr. Auden removes to the United States. Is it not in accordance with Mr. Fleming's own generosity to leave the matter to the individual conscience?

That we shall conquer our present enemies, I have no doubt. There are, the newspapers tell me, some two millions of my own generation (the youth which, Mr. Fleming, despite his exquisite

manners, seems a little to despise) standing between Mr. Fleming and the atrocities of the barbarian. The Athenaeum shall be preserved; a lasting monument to that dignity and poise which I, thanks to the politics of Mr. Fleming's own generation, shall have neither the means nor the leisure (nor indeed, perhaps, even the years), to acquire.

A Divisional Headquarters, Somewhere in England. February 19th.

I am, Sir, Yours faithfully,
ALAN ROOK.

TENDENCIES in MODERN POETRY. "... *odoriferous stench, sound rottenness,*" (W. Shakespeare). Suggested to ARTHUR LYNNFORD-SMITH by E. Vandermere Fleming's "Comfort for the Highbrow-Beaten."

Some modern poets find delight
By giving decency a fright;
They probe profoundest depths of sense
And lurid schools of verse commence.
Now these do not admit that sweets
Are found in Tennyson, or Keats—
The latter merely wrote some tales
Of Grecian urns and nightingales!

Diviner pleasures are contained,
So they have painfully explained,
In thoughts that people strictly shun.
Thus, common folk eschew much fun,
For these a joy have never found
In lavatories underground.
Now ponder some pure things of bliss
In deep potential wells they miss:

The sanitary van that calls
For refuse, now no more appals—
Our poets may grow sentimental
At squirming antics of the gentle!
Keats wove his songs of light and verdure,
Missing the richer themes of ordure—
That sense by doctors termed olfactory
In him was never satisfactory!

A piquant relish, quite refined,
Exalts the ultra-modern mind!

(*To the Editor*, THE POETRY REVIEW)

Sir,—I feel impelled to protest against what struck me as a sweepingly unfair disparagement, in your last issue, of two contemporary poets, T. S. Eliot and William Empson. Firstly, my old friend Eric

Peters dismisses " East Coker " as " unlyrical sentences " carved up into the " superficial semblance of verse." He thinks it is time someone ended the " Eliot ramp." It is difficult to see how any serious student can regard the widespread poetic influence of Eliot as a ramp. Recently, in the *Sunday Times*, Desmond McCarthy paid eloquent tribute to " East Coker." Is it likely that such a wise, traditional critic has merely been made the victim of a ramp ? To me this poem is one of the most interesting and evocative of our time.

Secondly, your reviewer John Waller's dismissal of Empson's latest collection, *The Gathering Storm*, as " terribly boring," seems to be an admittance of depressingly shallow and limited poetic appreciation. The first poem, " Bacchus," I will allow to Mr. Waller, but I maintain that " Aubade," " The Teasers," " Missing Dates " and " Success " are all outstanding poems. Beneath their nostalgic repetition—whose virtuosity Mr. Waller himself admits—there is for me deeply moving meaning. " Success," which I first read when it appeared in *Horizon*, is perhaps the best. In two lines Empson has achieved perfect portrayal of a very subtle human relationship.

" I have mislaid the torment and the fear,
You should be praised for taking them away."

The poems may need " working out," in fact certainly do, but they are well worth the working.

I cannot fairly be regarded as a precise intellectual, or as anything other than an extremely medium-browed young woman, but *The Gathering Storm* gave me more satisfaction than most of my recent verse reading, which has been a considerable amount. I did feel that here was someone with something to say : his way of saying it might be unusual, but that is reason for praise rather than condemnation. And so a further word to Mr. Waller's seemed due, not only for the reputation of a poet but also for that of THE POETRY REVIEW.

Aylesford, Kent.
January 25th.

Yours sincerely,
MARGUERITE WYKEHAM
(Marguerite Edgelow).

(*To the Editor of* THE POETRY REVIEW)

Sir,—I wish to protest against the eulogy of the principles of Dr. Marie Stopes by John Waller in the November–December issue of THE POETRY REVIEW. He, as she herself, confuses freedom with licence, the flesh with the spirit.

Putney. January 6th.

Yours sincerely,
KATHLEEN COOPER.

(*To the Editor of* THE POETRY REVIEW)

SIR,—May I, as a reader to whom poetry has been a pleasure throughout a long life, express my surprise at the ferocity of Mr. E. Curt Peters' letter in your January–February issue ?

Much of Mr. T. S. Eliot's work does not, in the apt American phrase,

readily strike on my box, but I cannot therefore believe that the undoubted admiration of his large public is a " ramp."

As to Dr. Marie Stopes' work, after reading someone else's copy of *Oriri*, I bought one for myself, knowing that it would take time before I fully exhausted my pleasure in it. I think we are most pleased when we find our own vague thoughts taken by a poet and crystallized for us, and this is what " Oriri " does. It is an instance of a writer who has an overwhelming message to deliver and tireless self-sacrifice and enthusiasm in its delivery. The logical culmination is that the message soars above the science which gave it birth and becomes poetry.

Pray allow me space to quote

There is ever the will for beauty ere beauty grows
Ever the thought of the rose before the rose
Ever the will to become
Before all life goes.

If these lines are rightly termed " neo-romantic effusions," then I have never understood the meaning of either word.

50 Onslow Gardens, S.W.7 Yours faithfully,
February 21st. F. L. Rudston Brown.

### Sir Robert Vansittart's Critics Answered by a Poem

(*To the Editor of* The Poetry Review)

Sir,—Sir Robert Vansittart, who is one of your distinguished Vice-Presidents, has recently published in book form his Overseas broadcasts, under the title of " Black Record."

" Black Record," as its name implies, is an historical review of the kind of evil which we were up against. In this struggle for God and Freedom what is wanted more than anything else is truth and leadership. In " Black Record " we have a fine example of both.

There is no other living man who knows his subject better than Sir Robert. " Black Record " has had an enormous sale, and has been widely welcomed, but inevitably there have been certain criticisms of Sir Robert's searching exposition of the fundamentals of German character. Some critics have suggested that he is Machiavellian.

May I quote a short poem that he wrote some years ago ?

" The love of God, that dwarfs all human passion,
Brighten the chequered path that we must tread,
And give us faith to breast in fearless fashion,
The hills that lie ahead.

" The light of God, that shines beyond our vision,
Smooth every wrinkle on earth's furrowed face,
And turn our fleeting darkness to derision
In every secret place.

" The peace of God, that passes understanding,
Calm every troubled sea beneath our feet,

And, in the distance, grant a quiet landing,
Where earth and Heaven meet."

These lines provide a complete answer to his critics.

House of Commons, S.W.1. Your obedient Servant,
February 22nd. WALDRON SMITHERS.

POETRY IN WAR TIME

(*To the Editor of* THE POETRY REVIEW)

DEAR SIR,—I enclose a small contribution towards the maintenance of the cause of poetry during the war, because I believe that this is the work being carried out by the REVIEW.

Some say that poetry is superfluous so long as there is such a fight for freedom in force that demands all our practical and strategical capabilities as well as thundering good common sense. All our energies, they say, should be directed along these channels, and those who stop to dabble their fingers in poetry are only fools and worthless.

It all depends upon the way in which we face this challenge. If we indulge in poetry as an escape from life, and think that we can use it as an ear-plug to stop out the cry of suffering humanity, then we certainly degrade the name of poetry.

But if, on the other hand, we use this great gift from God as an ointment we can use upon the spiritual wounds of others, and which can bring beauty into the everyday things of our lives, then we can fight for her and be proud that we loved her.

Yours faithfully,
January 29th. R.E.B.

(*To the Editor*, THE POETRY REVIEW)

Sir,—In spite of war restrictions, I am glad to note that THE POETRY REVIEW has not diminished in importance and vitality.

THE POETRY REVIEW remains to cheer us in these distracted days. It is with glad hearts that we see our President, Lady Tasker, helping us to do our bit for the War Fund by staging *Pygmalion and Galatea*. As a Muslim friend told me the other day, Lady Tasker is the life and soul of our local branch, and we owe her a deep debt of gratitude for her lively interest in all matters pertaining to The Poetry Society.

To see people of all castes and creeds brought together in the bond of unity by their common love for Poetry, makes us feel proud of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and puts an end to that spirit of contemptuous and uncomprehending Imperialism, which "under alien skies calls Aryan man a blasted nigger."

Director, Tutorial Classes Yours sincerely,
and Former Tutor to the Princes K. CLEMENT-JONES.
of H.H. the Nizam.
Hyderabad-Deccan. November 11th, 1940.

MRS. L. MARSHALL, Ancaster House School: THE POETRY REVIEW continues to be a source of great pleasure to us.

## *THE POETS' FELLOWSHIP :*

### THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

We have received an extraordinary number of praiseworthy contributions and for this reason some really good poems have been placed in the " Commended " list. In the same way, some which would usually have received an award of the Premium have been marked " Highly Commended." The best of these have been picked out for especial mention. The latter include VERE ARNOT (Walton-on-Thames), E. RADCLIFFE BINNINGTON (Louth), D. R. W. CARR (Ferryhill), ELLODE COLLINS (Bournemouth), W. R. LATHAM (Chingford, E.), BRENDA SKENE (Lustleigh) and D. E. C. TOMLIN (Harrogate). Especial congratulations are due to VERE ARNOT, whose evolution as a poet is very remarkable.

It gives great pleasure to make our sole award to EDITH M. WALKER (Bournemouth), whose name has been known to our readers for a long time. She has sent an admirable and deeply moving lyric, which is undoubtedly outstanding from all the other poems received.

#### HIGHLY COMMENDED

Vere Arnot, Walton-on-Thames ;
E. Radcliffe Binnington, Louth ;
R. E. Boulton, Winscombe ;
D. R. W. Carr, Ferryhill ;
Ellode Collins, Bournemouth ;
Reginald C. Eva, Hove ;
Dulcie Eden Greville, Wakefield ;
I. Sutherland Groom, Sedbergh ;
Eleanor M. Hough, Bombay ;
W. R. Latham, Chingford ;
P. E. Leaver, Kelvedon ;
R. McKie, Brighton ;
Roberta Shuttleworth, Guildford;
Bertha M. Skeat, Sedburgh ;
Brenda F. Skene, Lustleigh ;
D. E. C. Tomlin, Harrogate.

#### COMMENDED

Elizabeth Barrett, Thame ;
F. M. H. C., Kingston Hill ;
M.D.C., Kirkhill ;
T. E. Casson, Ulverston ;
Lettie Cole, Broadway ;
Dorothy Rosetta Colls, Chorley Wood ;
Marguerite Edgelow, Maidstone ;
M. S. Hewar, Worthing ;
E. M. Finn, Honiton ;
Peter Higham, London, W. ;
Jean Hope, Haytor, Devon ;
Gladys Hunkin, St. Ives ;
F. Jennings, Porlock ;
Mary Mair, Epsom ;
Phyllis Martin, Bury St. Edmunds ;
Hilda North, Carlisle ;
Margaret Ogier, Abingdon ;
Juliet Peel, Reading ;
T. Pittaway, Frome ;
Frances Pritchard, Bournemouth ;
P. E. Proctor, Taplow ;
Arthur Lynnford-Smith, Wanstead ;
Mairi Stewart, Newtownards
Dorothy Trail, Vancouver ;
Charles Woodhouse, Haslemere.

The usual premium offer for the best poem or poems submitted to the Premium Editor during the month (without limitation to subject) is continued. Not more than four lyrics or one long poem should be submitted. MSS. should reach " The Premium Editor, THE POETRY REVIEW, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," by April 1st, accom-

panied by stamped addressed envelope, and if criticism is desired, 2s. 6d. (For a more detailed postal criticism, 5s. should be sent.) It is essential that entrants to this competition be members of The Poetry Society or registered subscribers to THE POETRY REVIEW, and that each poem bears the name and address of the author.

ARTHUR ROW writes: "Whilst those foolish English who will not understand that the war is over" have been enduring the blitzkrieg, the Poetry's Society's advanced column "Poetry of To-Day" has captured a yet further height in its issue of number 58. Led by Captain C. E. H. Jacobs and chaplained with the spiritual support of the Reverend T. Pittaway the gallant little column has infiltrated itself through a mêlée of bathos, sensationalism and illiteracy, and the gloomy night through which we are passing gives promise of a peaceful and halcyon dawn.

It is certainly not the call of mammon that invokes poetic inspiration, nor is it just the desire for fame. For the glory of the English language and her finest of thoughts the writers of this quarterly rain down like manna their first of gifts, to let it be recorded by those who will.

It is with great pleasure that one reads the four easy and graceful poems, "Adrift," "Faces," "The Magic of a Voice," and "Mysteries," by Roberta Shuttleworth, and one cannot speak too highly of the three noble and majestic works by Irene Chapman Benson, "The Passing of Caesar," "To the Saint Lawrence River" and "Lament." The four poems by Redcliffe McKie with their swift insatiable invective and "Death in Battle," and "I Believe," by Wraith, are works of much power and analytical interest. Very moving is the poem "To Jeffrey Day," by Douglas O'Hanlon—an airman's tribute to an airman who fell in the last war. "Invocation to the Muse of Sacred Poetry," by R. C. Thomas and the two sonnets by G. E. B. McWilliam and "Midsummer," a longer poem, are worthy of the highest praise. Full of pertinent philosophy are the four poems of Rhoda E. Cutbush and there is good work accomplished by Sarah People and much promise by Mairi Stewart.

Especial praise should be accorded to the Rev. T. Pittaway for "Paul at Athens" and for his poem "The Naiad," a departure in subject and style from his accustomed output; to H.M., to J. Sackville Martin and to Robert E. Horsfall for his fine works "Battles are but echoes" and "The Sonnet" whose first line runs—"A sonnet is a temple of sweet thought."

Perhaps the most striking compositions in this number are from the pen of Christmas Humphreys in his war-poems "Whitsun 1940" and "June 1940", from the closing lines of the latter I would set down:

"The lists are open with the world as field,
The wounds of doubt with cold resolve are healed.
Now stands the heart of England true revealed;
We fight, until we fall. We shall not yield.

The Hampstead Centre deplores the loss of its President for the past nineteen years, by the decease of the Rev. Arthur Hugh Evelyn Lee, M.A., Vicar of St. Martin, Kensal Rise, N.W.10, from an acute attack of pleurisy—the aftermath of enemy action. It is good to remember that Mr. Lee found pleasure, as well as gave it, whenever pastoral duties allowed of his genial presence at the Centre's meetings; his keen interest being especially evinced when the subject was a classical play, of which he had invariably prepared an erudite and helpful introductory synopsis. All poetry lovers are indebted to the joint labours of D. H. S. Nicholson and A. H. E. Lee for *The Oxford Book of Mystical Verse*, first published in 1916, and during the last year of his life the latter was gathering material for an enlarged edition of the same work; but this congenial task for one described by an intimate friend as a "scholar-mystic" was never to reach fulfilment. An article by Mr. Lee on Mysticism in English poetry (the substance of a lecture) was published in THE POETRY REVIEW ten years ago.

We deeply regret to learn of the death of Mr. J. Frederick Tilly, who was prominently associated with the Hampstead Centre from its inception until his retirement to Hove ten years ago. He succeeded his first wife as Secretary of the Centre, and like her was most devoted to its welfare, taking personal delight in formulating and carrying out admirably co-ordinated programmes. During this period and later he was a most responsible and attentive member of the General and Executive Councils of the Society, his shrewd independent judgment being highly respected by his colleagues and constituting a bulwark of the Society, of the goodwill and credit of which he was a jealous guardian. Meticulous and methodical, he was particularly helpful as honorary secretary of the Shakespeare Guild, the branch of the Society responsible for promoting the Shakespeare Recitals which raised almost £1000 for the re-building of the Stratford Memorial Theatre. Very appropriately, too, Mr. Tilly was one of the Society's Trustees, retiring from office in May last owing to serious ill health. He had a wide knowledge and appreciation of the best in English literature, the reading of which was a perennial joy to him. We greatly deplore the loss of a most loyal and conscientious colleague, to whom The Poetry Society had a natural appeal.

REPORT ON AN AMERICAN MISSION:

Mrs. W. E. Simnett, a London member of The Poetry Society, who has recently returned from America, reports: We had a very strenuous time in the United States and Canada—my husband's mission taking him to many States lecturing, broadcasting, writing and being interviewed, etc. During the five months we were there we saw American opinion change rapidly in favour of Britain. America is truly a great country and we received much kindness everywhere from its warm-hearted people, but even so, we were glad when our hazardous voyage was over to be back in our own country at this time of trial.

A brief report of my P.S. contacts follows :

*New York.*—I called on Mrs. Hunt Bartlett and was very kindly received and at once invited to attend a meeting of poets, followed by a luncheon at the Washington Hall, N.Y. World's Fair. We were both invited to Mrs. Bartlett's birthday luncheon given by the same Society but unfortunately could not then be in New York. We were however able to accept an invitation to dine with her on Independence Day at her charming apartment on Park Avenue. You will know her enthusiasm for and pride in the P.R. and what an honour she considers it to have contributed to its pages for so many years.

*Pittsburgh.*—We were only there for a few days and every moment was taken up with my husband's mission, so that there was no time to present my letter of introduction, which I greatly regret.

*Chicago.*—Here I found great enthusiasm and a sincere love of poetry. The very able secretary, Mrs. Lopaz Dias, at once got in touch with the president, Mrs. Josephine Logan, and she in turn arranged a tea-reception at her delightful house on Lake Shore Drive at very short notice, at which my husband and I were guests of honour. The British Consul General and his wife were among many present. It was one of the most delightful functions of the many arranged for us. The house itself is a museum of art treasures and in this lovely atmosphere most of the Chicago P.S. were congregated to meet us. Although by no means a public speaker, I did manage in this happy atmosphere to make the needs of the P.S. in war-time known to the audience. Mrs. Logan herself is one of the most charming of wealthy American women :—there is a very real quality of sincerity and knowledge in her patronage of the arts, and it is this sincerity which I think will make the Chicago centre a very live one.

The Consul General arranged for me to meet a gifted young American poet, Miss Beverley Githens, whose work is inspired by a deep love for England which she has never seen and which some day I am hoping to show her. Mrs. Logan is also proud of her connection with the P.S., and the P.R. has a very high standing in America (I found it in the Public Libraries too).

I have described the Chicago reception at length because it shows their desire to do honour to Britain and the P.S. None of these things could be personal as they were arranged before I had met Mrs. Logan.

*Newport.*—Although not through the P.S., we met here Maud Howe Elliott, daughter of Julia Ward Howe, and many of the literary people who gather at her house, and also the late Sir Wilfred Grenfell (of Labrador), and my husband is very glad, in view of Lord Lothian's untimely death, that he had a long and intimate talk with the late Ambassador when lunching with him at the Embassy in Washington.

THE POETRY REVIEW, it seems to me, increases in worth and distinction of production almost with every issue: FRANK MOWBRAY TAUBMAN (Tewkesbury).

# DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: LXXXIX

John Warwick Daniel III is of distinguished parentage. Born in Georgetown, D.C., his residence now is in Virginia. We find on his father's side Senators and on his mother's side a noted physician, President of the Medical and Surgical Society, Washington, etc. Mr. Daniel studied portrait painting for four years at the Corcoran Art School in Washington and won honours in antique and life concours. He says of poetry :

> " My thoughts about poetry, which may or may not be in accordance with modern opinion, are spoken without certainty as to its final analysis, hoping that we who respect the illusiveness of composition may continue to receive from the great Source those moments of artistic perception which defy definition. My personal experience in writing poetry may be described very briefly. When I have written something which has given me particular pleasure in its creation, I have a feeling of exaltation apart from the self with whom I am acquainted. Then I am conscious that I have been fortunate in being a medium of expression and am grateful for that power which is greater than I. To-day, poets should welcome inspiration which fires the spirit of humanity to a striving for freedom, democracy, brotherly love and faith in God. A veil of mystery enfolds the contours of the Winged Stallion and the chase across the valley of stars changes pace throughout the ages in accordance with unleashed emotion properly directed. Always an echoing harmonic vibrates the heartstrings of mankind when poetry is read."

Let us read " Warsaw " in his new volume, *O Coming Age* (Bruce Humphries) :

> Truth once born can never die
> Though wars lay low the highest peak ;
> Beneath the cannon roar, the shrapnel shriek,
> Eternal Courage shouts : " Again, I'll try ! "
> " Strike down our homes, we will defy
> The pagan force that worships ruthless might ;
> The springs of God shall flow to bless the right
> And naked earth resist the swinish lie."
>
> " What man or woman fears to face the night
> That burns beneath the light of alien fire
> When birth returns the life that he may give ?
> For Liberty we bleed until our veins are white,
> For freedom spill the last of youth's desire
> And welcome death that Poland still may live ! "

It is probable that all poets have a special fondness for some particular bird and eulogizes him in verse. I find the Bluebird a most persuasive creature. Daniel sings of " The Mockingbird "—

Like a herald rainbow springing from a cloud,
His voice ascends the spangled arch of night;
Lovely with the colour of a thousand songs,
It throbs and fills the ear beyond delight.
Fresh in lyric plunder mellowed in his breast,
Our vocal Shakespeare wakes the silent hour;
Warm with eager rapture, his melodies addressed
To memories of day, for lovers of unrest.

Motley in its mixture, frenzied in its tone,
Sweeter far than solos ever are,
Medley follows medley in echoes that have flown
From throats that sang one song and one alone.
I do not know the skylark nor the feted nightingale,
But I have heard the mockingbird aspire
To serenade the stars with a tongue of silver fire,
And I have learned the music of a passionate desire.

*As We Are* (Bruce Humphries) is the first published collection of the work of Frances R. Angus. Her publisher says: "Long overdue." This poet sends us an unpublished poem which says what poetry is to her:

It comes out of sorrow,
Out of pain, out of joy,
A formless bliss, a recurring vision,
A rhythm of being in tune with the earth's
Unconscious perfection of living,
Then desire at white heat
Persisting through time
To bring out of darkness into daylight
The bliss that has been
That others may know,
And oneself live again
In revived ecstasy, that comes,
That goes, one knows not how.

In over a hundred pages, we find the charm of a mind attuned to joy and sorrow, satisfaction and regret and pause to read "Sanctuary," expressive of the everlasting call of the sea:

I have come back to the sea
From the teeming city streets,
To the lonely, rocky coast
And the wind-washed land still shorn
By winter's icy clippers.
The bay-bush holds her last year berries,
The ash trees have not leaved,
But columbine climbs the wave-worn cliffs
And runs across the moor,

The lilacs here are sweeter
Than those that grow elsewhere,
The apple blooms a deeper rose
In the sharp sea-air.
I have come home to the sea
To stay to the end of time.

Descriptive of life's limitations is " A Village " :

Close huddled upon the valley floor
The village lives, nourished on never-
Failing scandal's dish, the spicy
Condiments contributed
By ever watchful neighbours. Here avarice
Thrives and mean ideals and dullness
That drive the young who still have hope
To city streets in search of life.

And yet the mountains lift their glory
Beyond each village street, the lake
Holds lovers' dreams of tree and cloud,
Or wakened by the wind is towering
Sea, and Spring brings miracles
Of blossoming along the stream.

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

[We fear other reviews from Mrs. Bartlett have been lost in transit ; the above (dated December) did not reach us till we were about to go to press with this issue.—ED.]

RUTH VAIL (Edenton, N.C.) : Please forgive my neglect in reviewing my membership dues, which I now renew to August 1942. I enjoy the magazine, and commend your bravery in carrying on under such adverse circumstances. May the New Year dawn brighter for your people whose sorrows we feel so keenly, and victory and comfort come to you whose blood flows in our own veins.

C. O. CURRY (Liverpool, 22) renewing his membership subscription for 1941, writes : My best wishes to the Society and also to you personally during the coming twelve months during which I trust you will meet with continued support and success. Anything which sustains the spiritual life of a nation during such times as these is an asset which can be measured neither in money nor words ; and the sincerest religion, far from all sects and dogmas, is that which is expressed in poetry.

MRS. ALLEN MEDLEY (High Wycombe) in increasing her subscription to one guinea, writes : I appreciate all your difficulties and the efforts to keep up the interest and high standard of our Society. This war too is against any social intercourse, but we must as you say endeavour to keep the Society going until happier times.

# AMEN CORNER: AN EDITORIAL SURVEY

The recent controversies in THE POETRY REVIEW between orthodox and modernist poets is the surest sign that the REVIEW is alive and vigorously active, that amongst thinking people it accepts the democratic freedom of representing wide fields of international poetic expression without ignoring either the past or the present. The poets of the past were belaboured in their day with the rolling pin just as ours are to-day and those of to-morrow will likewise be. Fortunately poets have good heads, stout hearts and supple hands for gripping rolling pins in return! So they make their challenge to be heard.

To lay down hard and fast judgments now is like asserting that the whole of a house can be seen from its base. But at least we can determine by the basement whether it is Norman or Tudor, or if Queen Anne is dead!

One of the modern "high spots" may well be an intensified manipulation of the five senses. A recent accidental discovery in America revealed that where a colour-blind field artilleryman was not hoodwinked by a nicely camouflaged nest of guns the trained observer in the plane missed the lot, the reason being that the paint on the guns was a positive beacon to the colour-blind gunner, while the colour-conscious observer saw only what he was intended to see, and soothed by peaceful fields and amicable hedgerows, noted nothing amiss; the analogy being that many poetry critics to-day are poetically colour-conscious and miss a nest of something, possibly *wasps*!

Here we should challenge the commonly accepted sentiment, that these useful little insects are "just spiteful creatures." Had our brotherly or waspish love extended a little further, we could have saved Lord's cricket ground and bowled the abominable crane fly out! We have yet to save poetry from stagnation on the one side and vulgarity on the other and the wasps are undoubtedly again our helpers. Within twenty-four hours "scintillating versus nostalgic" can switch over in vogue to "W.C." (William the Conqueror of course!) or the futile "ambience" of something. So are we tossed either on the horns of animal excretions or alternate horns of atmospheric conditions. Need our poets (according to their school of thought) all cotton-on to one "vertically-scinting-incarnate-azure" word? Or a p - - jinx, b-b-word? The long awaited war poetry doesn't help. The piece of land that is "forever England" is most often a rotten basement of burnt rubble ten feet below surface and from sun. We all say "farewell" every morning and lie awake every night (waiting for the gun-butt rap!) and we are not consoled by knowing that some other poor devil is getting it instead of us. Our war experience is everyman's experience and not something we don't know about. It is not inspiration if we write about everyday things in an everyday way. If some-

body says they drank coffee out of a cup, the obvious answer is, " So what ? " So what do we do ? Our airmen might fill the bill since they have a completely new angle from which to weave life. Or we might try to extricate *Truth* from the debris under which she has lain so long. The *Truth* which suffers all things and heals all things, has been missed by the fashions of both the intellectuals and the emotionalists. Realistic poetry is fact and sensualistic poetry is fact heightened into fantasy, but Truth has a further quality than these. It is a *point with position.* Meantime it is exhilarating to publish such diverse opinions, as " There is no poetry to-day " or that " Shakespeare was more useful as a playwright than as a conscript suffering from scurvy," though it is not necessarily correct about there being no poetry, or equally certain that Shakespeare would have had to have scurvy ! Eliot has probably more chance of surviving London's bombing than Auden has of the traffic hazards of Fifth Avenue ; while Shakespeare could have discovered tobacco, or—*happy thought*—living later, even H.E. in the interests of future peace !

* * * * *

The *summum bonum* is that deportment is as essential to poetry as to every other branch of culture. Some celebrated architect with controlled medium of his genius introduces greater window space ; George Jerry the builder gets " the big idea " and immediately builds rows of villas stretched with elastic window bands through which Mrs. Smith makes daily notes as to whether Mrs. Brown across the way has gained or lost half a pound of flesh ! It is the same with modern poetry. Leaders through subtle allusion suggest human activity and the jerry poets rush in with streams of bald elastic words. Even Auden with " nose pickings " has tasted the range of jerry-built poetry. Modern poetry will undoubtedly continue. The desire to throw off the pedantry of ministerial jargon is shared by everyone since the professed expert is to-day regarded as something of a twister. Simplicity of expression and action contains a greater driving concentration. The wish to reach intelligent thinking through direct yet original channels need have no suppurating abscesses. True poets and true poetry are above all things robust ; and the full power of youthful culture is great enough in its own strength to elevate living through its glorious, vital colouring.

We can still enjoy Chaucer, Shakespeare and Tennyson, but for us their diction has passed with its form. If we moderns affected Chaucerian language, for instance, surely some amongst you would raise their eyebrows and look for bats in the belfry. Modern thought must sensibly demand modern expression, and since we are wise enough to put our new wine into new bottles let us make the vintage of our years supremely desired.

The key note of this present issue of POETRY REVIEW is modern effort amply exemplified. Speaking unbiasedly no one could say it lacks any of the dignities or culture of older periods. In our sense of living and as we understand it, it is young.

* * * * *

As an appendix and by way of illustration I refer to a new book published just too late for inclusion with the interjacent reviews, *The Father Found* by Charles Madge (Faber 6s.). Don't be literary aristocrats, but humbly get out your best dictionaries for in this book you have become instantaneously a collembola under the microscopic lense of a biological poet. After years of research on Mass Observation, Charles Madge has achieved in terms of earth-thinking a kind of abstract photosynthesis. Like Blake he begins to use another language in a further imaginative realm than that which we, on the dusty high road of life, talk and understand freely. Should we bother to solve this *Times* crossword ? Isn't poetry, as Yeats wrote, " natural thought in natural sequence " ? I read half the book, industriously threading the poems like exquisitely carved beads in a necklace, unable to interpret their cunieform symbols. What made me persevere ? Lines like, " The path remains after the feet have gone,"—a vanishing symbol chained to a stationary one ! There is something *abroad* in this man's work, some further absorption of light into matter. The test of his genius lies in the future with his third book. Will he be able to take us with him or will he become obscure, as he penetrates farther and farther into his further world ?

" This is the problem of our understanding,
Facing the window with transforming panes ;
The plant or sparkle of a star emerging
Inversely with the drawing of our gains."

Carlyle wrote " The eye sees only that which the eye brings the power of seeing,"—if not the exact quotation, the gist of it, for I cannot read the complete *French Revolution* to find that which in substance I remember. But by concentration on an object the eyes extend their vision as they adjust their focus and so by determined reading more and more truths reveal themselves in beauty. Charles Madge's work is amongst the most significant, refined and delicate examples of modern thinking, a proof that even in this rather coarse age (almost a replica of the Elizabethan) we have our soil fertilized for great deeds of courage, great art, and strangely, great coarseness. The appreciation of his work lies more with the future, but this present great age in which we live fodders the future harvest.

" Nor can we catch the white-armed falling star
Nor track the lionesses to their den.

E. M. STEPHENSON, Assoc. Editor.

## BEFORE EVENING

THE child I used to be awakes and cries
At times when all is quiet in the room
The fear comes back and all that it implies,
Dimension widens high up to the skies
And colour changes strangely into gloom.

It's at the hour before darkness falls,
Too early yet to have the curtains drawn,
The ceiling seems to merge into the walls
The desk in front of me recedes and palls
Faint mist is rising shyly from the lawn.

And helplessness invades me as of old
Experience, thought, achievement drops away
Like a brave mantle taken on too bold.
Disguise hides treachery in every fold
And leaves me naked in the waning day.

## ON RETRACING THE STEPS

ON retracing the steps
Left behind me during those wandering years,
Would I find them as they were
At the moment of their happening?

Or would I stare
At an unfamiliar, frightful thing
Of which no echoes dare to ring
Nor memory
Would care to cling.
Would they look at me so?

Or would they be steeped in glorious shades
Of gold and peacock blue,
Peacefully resting beneath the sky
And kissed by morning dew,
Watched over by the sun and moon,
By stars and bird and tree,

And bearing such exulting joy
That it were pain to see?

Or would I find them in that way
As they were left, that night or day,
That afternoon, that hour's plight,
That minute's scorn, that fancy's flight,
Just as they then were left?

For if they were bereft
Of but one particle of dust
Of that queer mixture of delight and boredom,
Of feeling nothing and of sensing much,
Of the complexity that made that minute
Just so and unlike any other minute—
If that were changed in either width or depth,
In any aspect of its one-time meaning
Inevitable then and seeming right—

I would ask God, as one just dying, might,
To let me pass and not retrace my steps.

## THOSE NIGHTS OF NIGHTMARE

THOSE nights of nightmare which are quite beyond
The reason and controlling of my will
They rise up out of nothingness, expand
And like a regiment of giants stand
Around my house, determined, grim and still.

Their stern resolve is stronger than my strength
And smothers in the bud all hope of flight,
Halfheartedly I grope to break their line
To reach the place of quiet that was mine
In reassurance of both day and light.

In vain. They stand. And mean to stay until
Their work is done. Among them I can see
Lost love, forgotten promise, ill used chance

Waiting to lead me to their godless dance.
All courage fails. Without another glance
I let them use me in mad fantasy. LIVIA LAURENT.

[The writer of these beautiful poignant poems (and many others) is the daughter of a German refugee who herself has had several volumes of poems in her native language published in Germany. The work of Fraulein Laurent, whom many will remember as a London actress with a rare beauty, is remarkable for her mastery of the English idiom.—ED.]

## MORNING

CHILDLIKE you wakened with dreamfilled eyes,
and brown hair draped down your face;
through the window a ray from the sunrise
shone on a square of lace
about your shoulders. You clasped your hands
upon my neck, like a child,
so that I thought "For her the sands
of Time stand still. The wild
passions of maturity
shall pass her by unknown.
She shall live through infinity,
wide-eyed, wondering, ungrown."
And so would think a stranger. Yet
I, who saw the truth,
remembered your trusting eyes wet
with tears. Life had no ruth
for you. That mobile lovely mouth,
I knew, had twitched in pain
and sorrow that sat there strange, uncouth,
and there shall sit again.
And how—unknown to me—had your
child's heart pulsed with grief?
For how many lonely hours, sore
and bewildered beyond relief,
had it pulsed? O childlike waking,
precious memories now gone,
that lay there sadly for the taking!
And now I am alone. J. H. B. PEEL.

## POETS IN TIME OF WAR

### In Memory of Wilfred Owen

POETS, who in time of war
Divide in visionary horror
Soul's dream from body's mission;
Knowing a holier connection
Than the will to destruction,
Compelling the boy in arms to kill his brother:

All who tell the grave story
Of love, the sad essentiality
Of pain, whom no bitterness
Bars from life's true loveliness,
Whose words are a tenderness
Of hands, caressing wards of maimed humanity:

Spirits who dream and move onward,
Leaving to us your dreams gathered
And resounding forever in the air—
O, believe us, this bodily despair
Stuns not our spirits, for there,
Serenely, our visionary heritage has flowered.

Bertram Warr.

## THE BEST IS YET TO BE

ENGLAND'S finest year is yet to come,
England's greatest gift to human life,
Of which the new historian will say,
Then they woke up,
In that year Englishmen woke up and knew
(At last) that
Man does not live by bread alone, but
By beauty,
By kindness,
By balanced minds in tune with singing hearts,
By willing even-handed loving justice,
By wealth distributed fairly amongst the people,
By the One Spirit guiding the many-in-one.

Aidan Clarke.

## HOW GREAT IS YOUR BELOVED?

HOW great is your Beloved? Mine
Is margin'd only with the final star.
His feet are on the homely shores,
Washed with the leas of cobalt wine
Where to and fro the siren moon indraws
The tumult of the sea, and slow
The moonled waters' tidal flow
Comes surging from afar.

Green are the limbs of my Beloved. Trees,
With feathery plumes and column'd dignity,
Where soft the busy twilight breeze
Makes elfin music. Through the night
Brown shoulders move in solemn dance
With weaving arms of suppliance
And whisper to the stars in ecstasy
Of delicate delight.

His heart is in the hills. Serene
He dwells amid the luminous proud air.
The ramparts of His splendour lean
In combat with the wind, and wear
The crown of silence. Proud, the ermine snow
Mantles the breast of night. Blue dyed
The valley mist, and soft below
The bells of eventide.

His eyes are in the light, and see
The humbler visions of the heart made whole.
The moon upon His breast is laid,
The sun His flaming aureole.
And I, of wholeness unafraid,
Of all His Love the littlest lowliest part,
Lie singing in the boundless me,
Close curled about His heart.

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS.

## HOMAGE TO W. H. DAVIES AT REST

COME, all ye birds of home in happy choir,
Who, plotting joy, with dawn and dew conspire,
Blackbird and thrush, and skylark on the wing !
Sing your own best—no migrant minstrels bring,
But home-born choristers of Sun and Spring—
Each with his immemorial song to sing,
Each with his own sweet notion of a song,
Yet ev'ry bird alike in love with glee—
Chanting in unison of ecstacy !

Come, tuneful birds (men's voices might go wrong),
Warble such requiems as of right belong
To him, whose songs are with us here—a blithe and lovely throng.

He was the latest of our line of lyric Englishmen :
He like a singing skylark scared our cawing rooks among :
His music thrill'd our glum, null NOW
As from the enraptur'd THEN
Of Shakespeare, Nashe, and Campion, of Dekker, Herrick, Benn.

Rhodesia. ARTHUR SHIRLEY CRIPPS.

## NEW LIFE

I HAVE begun to live again
At thirty-four or more.
I thought that there was nought but pain
Nought save lost hopes and visions vain,
I have begun to live again
For love has crossed my door.

So I who thought fair youth had past
And fires had died inside,
Feel all consumed by flames at last
Enfolded by his love so vast,
Lo ! I who thought fair youth had past,
Lie trembling at his side. . . .

ELLA D. VINALL.

## IMPRESSIONS (After the Chinese Manner)

### In Wisely Gardens

MAUVE wistaria trails
On an old wooden bridge
Below a steep rock-garden,
To the indulgent hum of insects
Plying to and fro
Between the iris blades
And the water-lily leaves—

Above me, in the rockery,
A young student-gardener
Patiently puts name-plates
To the myriad miniature plants
That paint the grey boulders,
Between which a tiny waterfall
Trickles incessantly—

The sky is blue as lapis lazuli,
With a white jade cloud
Promising refreshing rain
Sometime, sometime soon—
And, out of the nebulous distance,
Comes the dull, discordant drone
Of an enemy bomber.

### Companion Pictures Painted on Silk

(*A Reflection of The T'Ang Dynasty*)

SHE was coy,
Coy as a fawn
Peeping behind an old oak-tree—
And she was gay, too,
Gay as poppies among wheat—
And she was wistful sometimes,
Wistful as moonstones
Set in silver,
Or moonlight itself,
Moonlight in a thickly-wooded lane.

My wheat-field
Is ripe now,
And the reapers are ready to gather the grain

Into the barn,
But there are no poppies there—
And no fawns
Peep from the gnarled
Trunks of the oak-trees—
Only the moonlight remains . . .
Pallid remembrance of a lost sunshine.

### In Sussex

I SEE a black and white cottage—
Neatly thatched—
And beside the door
Stands an old man,
Rosy and rotund,
With a ready smile.

He is smoking tobacco—
"Shag" he calls it—
And contemplating,
With a deep content,
His newly-planted potatoes—
"Spuds" he calls them.

Tufts of daffodils—
Double ones—
Dot the grass
Under the old apple-trees
Beside the house,
And birds are singing
Quite incessantly,
Almost hilariously.

Sadly, I recall
How most of my time
Is spent in an office,
Reckoning accounts.
It has taken two hours
Of my only free day
To drive into the country
To see this picture of Life.

Roberta Shuttleworth.

# A POET WHO WROTE NO VERSE

MY earliest introduction to the writings of Llewelyn Powys, who died in December, 1939, in Davos at the age of fifty-four after a protracted struggle against ever-increasing ill-health, dates back to the year 1925, when a volume dealing with his experiences in East Africa appeared under the apt and suggestive title, *Black Laughter*. A handful of discerning critics received the book with decorous expressions of approbation, but it evoked. a limited response, causing no flutter amongst the literary dovecotes. Guided by an impulse I no longer recollect, I bought a copy, and discovered to my surprise and delight that here was no stereotyped collection of traveller's tales : no mere string of adroitly spun yarns of encounters with ferocious beasts and of hardships manfully endured among the toils of the "dark continent." But, instead, the intensely felt and vividly recorded reactions of a rich, sensitive mind and an arresting personality to the myriad facets of African life.

Thereafter I proceeded to rout out a copy of Powys's earlier collection of essays, *Ebony and Ivory*, already somewhat of a collector's piece and difficult to obtain. While the majority of these sketches likewise had an African setting, the book as a whole failed to impress me to the same degree as the other, although there is a foretaste here and there of the author's gift for conveying atmosphere : flashing pictures of wild life, the hint of elemental conflicts and mysterious undercurrents, all the hidden activity of a strange and vast continent still for the most part untamed by man.

These early essays, then, bear traces of that unerring instinct for the right word, the most telling phrase, which was to prove the hall-mark of Powys's style. Take, for example, this sentence,

> "They (consumptives) become unaccountably preoccupied, and their souls seem to slink back to the remotest corners of their bodies, reappearing, only at the rarest intervals, to wave wild and supplicating hands out of the windows of their eyes."

What a Goya-like picture of suffering stare out at us from that passage! What sensibility is inherent in its conception!

There followed *Skin for Skin* (1926) and *The Verdict of Bridlegoose* (1927), in beautifully bound and impeccably printed limited editions. They contain thoughtful and exquisitely wrought autobiographical studies, in which the author's hedonistic and anti-Pauline outlook upon life are beginning to crystallize into a reasoned philosophy. A passage from the first-named of these books will serve to illustrate both his mistrustful attitude toward the orthodox Church of England mentality and his gift for conveying atmosphere and colour :

> Sometimes, of an early Sunday morning, I would enter the old grey church to take the sacrament. The crisp air outside, each straw on the road having hoar-frost upon it, made a brave contrast to the stuffy, half-darkened interior of the building, where, before a primitive altar, a bereft priest would raise a chalice aloft in a devout ecstasy. And as I knelt with bowed head to partake of the beautiful, antique ritual, I would try to conceive what inner secret the wild rumour held, so that it could survive generation after generation, wherever two or three might be gathered together. And with the curious peace of the place about me, with the cold, bare trees in the churchyard hedge visible through the leaded window-panes, with the candle-lighted chancel, and the Vicarage maid-servant in the pew at my side, I would feel half-inclined to believe also. . . .
>
> Then a different mood would come upon me. I would hear a strutting rooster in Farmer Tod's farmyard call reveille to his sely pullets, and immediately I would begin wondering what in the devil's name could have started the " crazy story, going so crazy, crazy." And like a green-crested poll-parrot, whose foolish head can think only of peeled almonds, I would nod and nod again at that homely altar, with its tall, spluttering, yellow candles.

In 1930 appeared his acutely reasoned analysis of Christian dogma, *The Pathetic Fallacy*, the very scope and thoroughness of which served to show how far the question of belief and acceptance had exercised the author's mind, and how much critical thought he must have devoted to the subject. The book is a challenge to that rigid code whose originator was the tormented tent-maker of Tarsus, and claims the fundamental teaching of Jesus to have been something far more liberal and humane than St. Paul had ever conceived. The argument is postulated without rancour and without conscious prejudice, and may be studied to their edification and advantage by sceptics and believers alike, provided they

are prepared to set aside their own preconceived notions concerning a subject all men are only too prone to regard as a matter of custom and convenience, a social attribute rather than a hub around which all ethical considerations in a predominantly Christian society ultimately revolve.

Powys realises only too well how easy it is for people to fall under the spell of the " wild rumour," and how many of us find ourselves turning instinctively to an otherwise neglected deity in moments of despair when life seems too hard a task-master. As he says in his essay on the Oxford Group.

> It is a mistake to think it is hard to believe : nothing is easier. All the lonely longings of the individual mind, all the atavistic frights of a race doomed to die, press towards such a state . . . ,

and then proceeds,

> The world to-day does not require men and women with religious minds so much as men and women with courageous minds, with minds free from prejudice . . . ,

a contention which the last few months have amply borne out.

At this point some may feel disposed to retort that it is just such an attitude of mind which has led the world to its present pitiable pass, to the brink of the abyss, that that way lie materialism and opportunism, and that the road such men tread is the highway to Hitlerism and chaos. But to argue thus is to misinterpret Llewelyn Powys's essential integrity of mind. He found himself unable to accept the dogmatic Christian tenets, yet he believed passionately in human values, the true and lasting values. If he attached too great importance to rationalism at the expense of intuition, this made him neither cynical nor intolerant ; if he preached that man should live his life fully and not in constant dread of eternal retribution in a hypothetical after-life for indulging his appetites in this, he also denounced cruelty and esteemed the nobler human attributes.

Death he resented rather than feared. He resented its power to rob, at any moment it chose, the individual of that "inestimable privilege" of being alive, to use Powys's own phrase. By "being alive" he meant an almost super-

sensitive awareness of the multifarious living world about us. " Life is its own justification ! " he exults, as he watches with never-failing delight the convoluted flight of a herring-gull, the enamelling on a butterfly's wing, the fresh bloom upon a young girl's cheek. What he could not abide was that state of half-living in which so many of his fellow-beings pass the greater part of their adult lives, and which he termed " death in life."

He was a proselyte of Epicurus, that master of lucid thought, and in an essay entitled " The Epicurean Tradition " quotes a passage from the philosopher which, he considers, amply demonstrates the futility of fearing death,

> Death, which is said to be an evil, hath this belonging to it, that when it hath been present it hath never troubled anybody. . . . Death is nothing to us ; for that which is dissolved is without sensation ; and that which lacks sensation is nothing to us.

Hence, also, he could face the prospect of utter annihilation, without terror ; only with regret for something irretrievably lost, something that was full of fascination and delight.

So much for his philosophy. Where stands he as a writer ? In my opinion he was one of the select company of stylists, and I use the word in its highest connotation. So much has been written, and will no doubt be written, on the vexed question of style ; so many controversies have raged around the subject of what constitutes style, that it would be foolish to attempt any sort of definition in a brief article.

I shall content myself, then, with saying that the majority of Llewelyn Powys's essays are no less than prose-poems ; that they are shot through with a true poet's imagination, sensibility and apperception. Indeed, it is remarkable that he never attempted the verse form, at least where his published writings are concerned.

He did not hold with the starkness of much of our present-day writing, nor at the other extreme with the portmanteau best-seller whose worth is assessed as much by bulk as by quality. Rather, he took a genuine delight in the perfect moulding of phrase and sentence, using language as

it was intended to be used, much as the master-potter shapes his clay. Thus, with his flowing, limpid and yet incisive style, he runs counter to the prevailing tendency towards journalistic prose and the banalities of the reporter's notebook. He looked upon journalism as a distinct and separate field which should never be allowed to impinge upon the more exclusive domain of "belles lettres."

Some of Powys's finest writing is to be found in a collection of essays, *Earth Memories*, which first appeared in 1934. Here he throws a searching beam upon every aspect of the Dorsetshire scene which he knew so intimately, and superimposes that pagan and earthly philosophy which sums up his attitude towards life. Born and bred in Dorset, he ever made a point of returning to his beloved home county, however far afield his travels—mostly undertaken for reason of health—might lead him.

In *Damnable Opinions*, a year later, he drew upon his acute critical faculties to tilt at prejudice and intellectual cant, particularly among religious institutions.

*Glory of Life*, first published in a superb format by the Golden Cockerel Press, and later reissued in a cheaper, but still handsome, edition, reaffirms his courageous, if rather limited credo. Here again the writing soars as upon wings.

His last book, *Love and Death*, was on a more ambitious scale. Partly autobiographical, partly invented, it presents Powys's attempt to re-live a boyhood idyll ; to see the great adventure of youth with youth's eyes, when youth is long left behind ; to recapture all its eagerness and hope, while burdened with the years, aware of the shadow of death hovering in the " wings." It is outspoken and transparently sincere, and if it does not entirely achieve what it set out to do, it must be regarded, none-the-less, as a distinguished failure.

Even though his death was allowed to go almost unnoticed, Llewelyn Powys was a writer of fine English, a poet who wrote no verse ; and his works will be read, I venture to prophesy, long after many a meteoric best-seller has sunk into oblivion, provided that civilisation survives the present ordeal.

E. Curt Peters.

## LOSS

LACED together by slender wires,
The lean posts gracefully loped
As lithe greyhounds
Over the brow of the hill
In the shimmering haze
Of our summer day.
How we laughed!
As he said
"Shall we follow them
Follow to find at their end
The crock full of gold"?
You, so vital, so young
That death was the farthest unthinkable thing. . . .

Now stark in my winter eyes
Blurred by infinite loss,
Dim in distorting mirror of tears
The poles toss
And sag,
Advance and recede
Drunkenly reeling
Wires tangled
As the mazed threads of my grief. GLADYS HUNKIN.

## SHORE IN TIME OF WAR

THE waves diminish to a plaintive dirge
sounded by seagulls over musselled groynes
where a million pastel shells scatter the sand,
stragglers on wet macadam—caught and held.
A gull flashes through air, a scythe through wheat,
where silver fish scales follow each on each
and a blood orange of sun falls on water
to swallow deep in red their little death.
The wire lies twisted, row piled up on row
and summer huts hide memory-haunted guns.
Curlews are long fled from the salted marshlands
as the print of human foot from mined strand.

MARGUERITE EDGELOW.

## MOON-CRATER AND LUNATIC ASYLUM

*(With apologies to many writers of modern verse—strange chroniclers of the times)*

HEAR the wail of the Age
And the plight of the Muses
Serving face for the frozen
Where the car sidles grunting.
Hail rudder-reed, hail turbine!
And the gasometer gangrene gutted
By the dapple-with-dogrose slate-shine
Council houses where the cow clods
As they flame to the dove-nest.
Marry it now, mild master, to the wombed West
Under the, mercy O, rain rods
Outblessed, inblessed.
Oh song, be grasshopper-praised!

Appeared on Epsom Downs that son of imps
Despair impaled, whose trousers droop to Heaven,
Black buckled from the bones of a giraffe
Though Enid Sell maintained mandragora
To insulate the focal brown eclipse
In critical uplifting of her hips
Arming the cowhide and the blanket moth.
So Dyeworks Tom, you should have blacked forlorn,
As Skinbag Awesome proved in sackcloth scorn,
Cud-chewing slate of Wales to serve your broth.
And yet, cheer up, there's gumption in the moth
And that blue iron rusting with the ships
Plain as a pimp to any eyes of horn.

What do they think, what truth is on their lips?
Is this their creed, and do their vitals scoff?—
The public's dull, its bum is in its eyes,
It neither sees, nor knows, nor thinks, nor tries;
Green legs to pull until the socks come off.
Ah! that half-bitten tongue that fills life's cheek
Puffing a feathered outrage to the meek
And adulation to the belfry bat
Where Laura Jog-trot's grave-yard serves their train.

The world's gone wrong ; how good to make it worse !
Though hard for me to write in fog like that
Pushing a planchette to invite the rain
Till this sur-realism gets the hearse
And the chained minstrel can walk free again.

So write the Iliad on a mustard seed,
Love's sacred name from all the unyielding oaks
Drive to the roots. Adam could no more heed
When out of Eden he undid the hoax
And Claribel discerned him from the hollow
Telling it darkly to the crocus-weed,
For husk's the grain, and there is death to follow.

HERBERT PALMER.

## FOR HAROLD

HE was my friend.
They left him, red with the wounds he won,
Froze to the shell half-lifted, back to the shattered gun.
Gone to the God of Gunners,—gone with the gun's report !
Sword,—and the sword was broken.
Song,—and the song cut short.

Be there but one small heaven where gunner and gun may lie,
Searching celestial spaces, ranging an empty sky ;
So shall I surely find him there, when the work is done.
Ghost of the godly gunner, serving the godly gun !

Breach block to pencil barrel, sullen and gaunt and grim,
Speaking again, as ever she only spoke for him.
Gunner a-sweat and laughing, grey in the smoke.
Perchance
Singing a song of slaughter, once on a beach of France.

Be there but such a heaven ?—Surely as is the sun !
God,—let me die a gunner,—serving the godly gun.

T. T. WRIGHT (Pte.).

## WINTER IN BETHUNE

AS the white moon revolves in her endless cycles,
As the forests deeply sway, recalling the past,
As the earth stirs down in her ageless cradle
And the polar skies rekindle
Their heartless fire, and the mountains
Remotely echo the voice, the desire of a lost generation :

As the northern winter descends on these fields of Europe,
As the northern winds lend steel to this lonely hour,
As the storm-bound ships make head for dangerous harbours,
All these, the latent ardour
And fears, all that ever this
Generation dimly loved rises to meet this hour.

For this is the hour of life, of the endless search for knowledge,
This is the hour for discovering bones of the fruitful past,
The hour to plan a thousand brilliant cities,
To change a shirt,
To post a forgotten letter,
To drink a glass of wine, a *bruderschaft*, and part.

One hour ! No more, to explore the eternal planets,
One hour to assimilate the tank, the shell,
One hour to glimpse the moment's revealed purpose,
To compose a face, to receive
The endless, enduring shadow of
Destruction, to accept the necessary murder. To understand.

But they, the immortal powers that devised this burden,
Ever more clearly, ever more surely, as death
Reaches to the catastrophic moment, cold and indomitable,
Reveal the dull, sickening
Approach of the shadow, the music
Swelling, the unthought mysteries,
The magnificent and inexplicable harmonies of war.

ALAN ROOK.

## HALF-PAST ELEVEN

AT half-past eleven that night
The bombed clock stopped.
At half-past eleven that night;
And hundreds of lives stopped,
And many dancing feet stopped,
And laughter died from the face,
When death fell from the sky
At half-past eleven that night.

But high courage was born
At half-past eleven that night;
And love and duty were born,
And languid youth stirred, became mighty,
And sacrificed, and struck terrible blows;
And the lion stretched forth his paws,
When death fell from the sky
At half-past eleven that night.

Bristol. VIOLA M. HUGGINS.

## THE POOR AT WAR

(BRITAIN, WINTER 1940)

O THAT one current, steady across years!—
Millions, millions of arms forever reaching,
Athwart the saint's example and his teaching,
Backwards from poverty, away from tears!

These many now for Righteousness and Good
Enduring toil, sweat, anguish, mutilations,
Leave the one-way and nameless generations,
Live with that lovable small multitude
Who, their simple hearths and suppers calling,
Stayed on the fells far off as dusk was falling,
Eating up every word the Prophet said,
Dimly aware that such alone could save them—
Who were amazed when tenderly He gave them,
After that feast, the meal of fish and bread.

N. K. CRUICKSHANK.

# IN MEMORIAM

## VIRGINIA WOOLF, APRIL 3RD, 1941.

SHE loved the spring. She loved all fine and lovely things—
fine words finely chosen, strung together like seemly jewels—
she was a gentle spirit and a strong.
She had delicacy of mind—torment in a vulgar world,
and a lucid balance of mind—torture in a world of confused mental flounderings,
and too clean a sense of right values for a world of equivocation and "expediency";
above all, she had the gift called by one[1] "a crown of stars and a slaying sword"—imagination,
and for that was hourly crucified, because to her, as to Blake, another's woe was her own.
She loved, and gave, life, being a creator, and so loathed destruction,
she could not see creation's purposes so basely overthrown.

But perhaps it was mostly because she loved the spring that she died.
One day she heard the feet of approaching April dancing through the woods,
and lightly rose, and went out to meet her.

In the woods she found the first primroses, and the dusted gold of the willows,
and delicate wind-flowers thrusting through the last year's leaves—
life conquering death again, life passionately asserting itself in the woods and the fields,
while humanity screamed against the forces of life: "Crucify them! Crucify them!"

And it was the voice of the river that insistently called at last and would not be denied,
the flowing peace of the river—and the life of the first spring flowers.
She shared Ophelia's end . . . and the willows lean down and

brush the glassy water with their golden hair,
mourning for her, and for all her kindred slain by the insensate world.

[1] Fiona Macleod.

DALLAS KENMARE.

## NIGHT RAID ON LONDON, SUSSEX ROUTE, OCTOBER 1940

WHO, who shall dwell with the devouring flame?
Those whose high deeds are blazon for their name—
These who amidst their blazing city's fires
Already build the walls of their desires,
The righteous bulwarks worthier of their heirs
Saved to enjoy a juster world than theirs.
The young lithe birdmen with the smiling eyes,
Fitter to hail the dawn in paradise
Than shoot like comets to the midnight lists
Athwart the bladewhite beams that stride the mists,
Flash through the jungle of the crowded sky
With drifting snares spread for the alien fly
And molten scatter of the ceaseless shell,
Armed with a spirit to outstagger hell,
Their righteous fury scorching as they smite,
The latest fledglings of our ancient might.
These birds that rise to meet a fiery dawn
And win the game that took their boyhood pawn,
Who chase the devil from the English stars
And dare the future's utmost shame their scars,
Farewell green playgrounds for the blasting dark—
These our winged cherubim bear up the ark.

O doubly coward I who shelter here,
Hearkening the terror's flight with sharpened ear
That threads metallic every midnight now,
While these go hunt the dragon for a vow!
Unworthy of this room of goldlit wings,
And recreant to the deeper faith that springs
To follow where the flying wrestlers wheel
And see the sons of God beside their keel.

REDCLIFFE MCKIE.

*A SPRING TIME PAGEANT*

# FLOWERS IN POETRY

IF anyone in this super-statistical age were to work out, by research, what flowers are most frequently mentioned in literature (indeed it may have already been done) one imagines that the result, arranged in order of popularity, would be something like this : rose, violet, daffodil, daisy. The poppy and one or two others, possibly the primrose, might also be " placed," while a whole garland of lesser competitors would secure a few points each.

" A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." But it might not appear so many times in poetry, as Helen Temperley has admirably shown in her recently published anthology, *The Rose Upon Her Briar* (Bodley Head, 7s. 6d.). The grace and rhyming facility of its name, as well as its immemorial status as the queen of flowers, have undoubtedly helped it to score a little unfairly over the other favourites through being introduced in many passages simply as an equivalent for " flower " ; e.g. in some of the later versions of the old theme " Gather ye rosebuds while ye may." The rose in the second or third century " Pervigilium Veneris " is a real rose enough, " of dew and fire and deep red sunbeams made," a bud to-night but opening its dewy heart in a flame of crimson to-morrow, the morrow of the refrain, " Cras amet qui nunquam amavit, quique amavit cras amet " ; " when he who never loved must love, and ancient lovers love again." The rose of the Romans was probably the damask, which seems to have come over with Venus-worship from Syria to Greece, thence to the Italian rose-gardens of Paestum. This deep red rose is the inspirer of the original " Gather ye," a late Latin poem attributed to Ausonius :

> This bud is green, wound in a sheath of leaves.
> This soft one, stained with red.
> This opens the long wrappings of her spire,
> Freeing the crimson head. . . .
> The dark red tresses of the glowing flower
> Fall streaming as I speak. . . .
> Gather the roses, maiden, while their youth
> Is fresh, new-born their bloom,
> Remembering how thine age will haste as soon.

By the time the theme has passed down the ages through Spenser (" Gather the rose of love, whilest yet is time ") to the Cavalier lyrists, the rose has become little more than a synonym for " flower." George Herbert, however, paints a real rose, in its full glory of colour, in " Virtue " :

> Sweet rose, whose hue angry and brave
> Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye,
> Thy root is ever in its grave,
> And thou must die.

and Bridges in our own day comes back close to the original (*Testament of Beauty*, III, 233) :

> As when a rosebud first untrammeleth the shells
> of her swathing petals and looseneth their embrace,
> so the sunlight may enter to flush the casket
> of her virgin promise, fairer than her full bloom
> shall ever be, ere its glories lie squandered in death.

None the less, all these roses are clearly the garden variety ; and most flower-worshippers are conscious of some faint difference in their attitude to garden beauties and to wild flowers. It is rather as if garden flowers were one's aunts and uncles, to be respected, however beloved ; whereas the wild flowers are our brothers and sisters, almost our children. So the wild rose, dear, familiar, untidy, lives imperishably conjured up by the homesick imagination of Rupert Brooke :

> Unkempt about those hedges blows
> An English unofficial rose.

The violet and the daffodil owe much to their season, to the long-awaited evidence they bring of the yearly miracle of life from the dead. For all that, the violet's very earliness sets it at a disadvantage as compared with the rose, according to Sir Henry Wotton :

> You violets that first appear,
> By your pure purple mantles known.
> Like the proud virgins of the year,
> As if the spring were all your own—
> What are you, when the rose is blown ?

" Proud " is a surprising word to find linked with the violet. Wordsworth notes its modesty :—

A violet by a mossy stone,
Half hidden from the eye :

the intensity of its colour caught the eye of Milton : " The glowing violet, and pansy freaked with jet," and is sung by Tennyson in *Maud* :

Whenever a March wind sighs
He sets the jewelled print of your feet
In violets blue as your eyes.

The all-too-speedy disappearance of the little flower when its short life is over was observed by Keats (" Ode to a Nightingale ") : " Fast fading violets covered up in leaves."

" I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died." So speaks Ophelia as she goes round the court presenting funeral gifts of rosemary and pansies, columbine and rue, her poor wandering wits enacting the stately burial which had been denied to her father ; and only a day or two later her brother cries over her grave.

Lay her in the earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring.

One may believe that the wish was fulfilled when but a short time after both Laertes and Hamlet lay buried beside her ; as in the words of a modern writer on the redemptive character of flowers,

When they spring from ground consecrated by human passions past and sleeping, they become the poignant symbol of Time's purging, and earnest of immortality. That which can issue still in beauty is not dead but quick.

The daffodils and their brave greeting to the spring are turned into poetry on the lips of Perdita in *The Winter's Tale* :

daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty.

Their gay movement becomes a joy for ever to Wordsworth :

For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude :

And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Masefield writes, "I have seen the lady April bringing the daffodils," and again in *The Daffodil Fields*,

the flowers
Stood in the dim like souls without a voice.

The daisy, Spenser's "little daisy that at evening closes," finds a place among the immortals perhaps because of its very humility: humility combined with vitality and independence. It was that brave defencelessness which stirred the sympathetic heart of Burns when his ploughshare crushed it:

The flaunting flowers our gardens yield
High sheltering woods and walls maun shield,
But thou, beneath the random bield
O' clod, or stane,
Adorns the histie stubble field,
Unseen, alane.

The neatness of the daisy twice suggested to Milton the epithet "trim"; in *Comus*, "The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim," and "Meadows trim with daisies pied," in *L'Allegro*.

To Alice Meynell, in a mood akin to Wordsworth's in the closing lines of his Immortality Ode, this humblest of flowers stands for the ultimate mystery of being:

Slight as thou art, thou art enough to hide
Like all created things, secrets from me,
And stand a barrier to eternity. . . .
O daisy mine, what will it be to look
From God's side even of such a simple thing?

So to Blake and to Tennyson the final mystery lies only just behind the visible substance of a flower:

To see a world in a grain of sand, and a Heaven in a wild flower:

Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

So the mystery breaks finally upon the illumined consciousness of Dante in Paradise, through the rolling up of the veil of materiality when the flowers growing beside

the river are transformed under his gaze to the shape of things to come.

" the true realm . . . so far outstretching that its circumference would be too loose a girdle for the sun " ; heaven opening like a white rose, unfolding petal by petal, rank upon rank of faces gazing into the central radiance which is God : " cosi e germinato questo fiore."

" The iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy." This flower breathes its opiate qualities through literature, from Virgil's " soporiferumque papaver " (" sleep-bearing poppy," but no translation can give the long-drawn-out dream-world effect of the hexameter ending) to Keats' personified Autumn asleep in the harvest-field " drowsed with the fume of poppies," and the charmed heavy atmosphere of Tennyson's " Lotus Eaters " :

> In the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
> And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

Armistice Day year by year recalled how " In Flanders fields the poppies blow," poppies of a deeper and more significant association with a sleep that is no mere poetic legend. These are the depths touched by Francis Thompson in his poem *The Poppy* :

> Like a yawn of fire from the grass it came,
> And the fanning wind puffed it to flapping flame . . .
>
> The sleep-flower sways in the wheat its head,
> Heavy with dreams, as that with bread ;
> The goodly grain and the sun-flushed sleeper
> The reaper reaps, and Time the reaper.

The blending of flowers and dew has inspired some of poetry's loveliest imagery, from the dew-born rose of the " Pervigilium Veneris " to Matthew Arnold's " Dark bluebells drenched with dews of summer eves." Sometimes the dewdrops are pictured as the flowers' jewellery ; thus in *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* the fairy goes " to hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear " and a lyric from one of Fletcher's plays bids us

> See the dewdrops how they kiss
> Every little flower that is :
> Hanging on their velvet heads
> Like a rope of crystal beads.

To other poets, the dew is the flower's drink; either for itself, as in Milton's line, "Every flower that sips the dew," or provided for the insects, like Keats'

> musk-rose full of dewy wine,
> The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves,

or for the fairies, as in Herrick's exquisite picture of the tiny fairy king's banquet:—

> The elves present to quench his thirst
> A pure seed-pearl of infant dew,
> Brought and besweetened in a blue
> And pregnant violet.

In Milton's *Lycidas*, the flowers join in the mourning for the dead, weeping drops of dew: "And daffodillies fill their cups with tears."

I do not know whether there exists such a thing as an anthology of smells. Of scent-quotations, to put it more elegantly. If there is one, surely flower-scents, distilled into literature, must take a big place in it. Parts of Bacon's *Essay on Gardens*, for instance, concentrating as it does the whole fragrant essence of "old-fashioned" garden flowers:

> That which above all others yields the sweetest smell in the air is the violet, especially the white double violet, which comes twice a year. . . . Next to that is the musk-rose; then the strawberry leaves dying, with a most excellent cordial smell . . . then sweet-briar, then wall-flowers, which are very delightful to be set under a parlour or lower chamber window; then pinks and gillyflowers, specially the matted pink and clove gillyflower; then the honeysuckles, so they be somewhat afar off."

Lime-blossom, richest and most unforgettable of English summer scents, breathes across Matthew Arnold's *Scholar Gipsy*:

> Air-swept lindens yield
> Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
> Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid.

The lime's whispered hint that it preserves the spirit of ages long past, a mysterious enticement of dangerous wisdom like the Gioconda's smile, is caught by Bridges in the *Testament of Beauty* (II, 349):

> the queenly foliage
> of a tall linden tree, where yearly by the wall

of some long ruin'd abbey she remembereth her
of glad thanksgivings and the gay choral sabbaths,
while in her leafy tower the languorous murmur
floateth off heavenward in a mellow dome of shade.

The hot flavour of gorse-blossom is captured by Meredith, in *Juggling Jerry*:

Yonder came smells of the gorse, so nutty,
Gold-like and warm; it's the prime of May.

and Kipling, in two lines from *A Song of Sussex*, embalms all the fragrance and freshness of the Downs:

Only our close-bit thyme that smells
Like dawn in Paradise.

Breath of flowers helps to make up the secret brooding enchantment of Walter de la Mare's poetry:

Speak not—whisper not:
Here bloweth thyme and bergamot;
Softly on the evening hour
Secret herbs their spices shower:
Dark spiked rosemary and myrrh,
Lean-stalked, purple lavender.

Even more haunting is *The Hawthorn Hath a Deathly Smell*, a poem which I have heard a Sudan British official, at work through the scorching dry heat which kills all scent just as it parches all greenness, accuse of producing worse homesickness for England than any other:

An apple; a child; dust
When falls the evening rain;
Wild briar's spiced leaves
Breathe memories again;
With further memories fraught
The silver of the May
Wreathed is with incense for
The Judgment Day.

Flower-scent borne on the air provides one of the rapturous accumulation of similes in Shelley's *Ode to a Skylark*:

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-wingèd thieves.

Bridges, in the *Testament of Beauty* (IV, 482) depicts the flowers which close in the sunshine and yield their treasures of scent at night :

> Lily-of-the-valley, Violet, Verbena, Mignonette,
> Hyacinth, Heliotrope, Sweet-briar, Pinks and Peas,
> Lilac and Wallflower, or such white and purple blooms
> that sleep i' the sun, and their heavy perfumes withhold
> to mingle their heart's incense with the wonder dreams,
> love-laden prayers and reveries that steal forth from earth
> under the dome of night.

A little further on he imagines scent made visible :

> I know
> that if odour were visible as colour is, I'd see
> the summer garden aureoled in rainbow clouds,
> with such warfare of hues as a painter might choose
> to show his sunset sky or a forest aflame.

Chesterton's dog Quoodle has not the slightest doubt that man's smelling powers are all off the track and that there are plenty of scents in the world which elude his nose altogether :

> The wind from winter forests,
> The scent of scentless flowers . . .
> Even the smell of roses
> Is not what they supposes,
> But more than mind discloses,
> And more than men believe.

It may be ; very like.

The homesick longing of sojourners abroad for the spring flowers of England has inspired not a little flower-poetry—sometimes, it must be admitted, to the disparagement of the flowers in foreign parts—from Browning's *Oh to be in England*,

> where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
> Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
> Blossoms and dewdrops,

and at the end

> The buttercups, the little children's dower,
> Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower,

to Flecker's homeward-looking *Brumana*, where he

turns weary eyes from the regions whither his boyhood dreams have lured him,

> lands
> Where blaze the unimaginable flowers,

to the incomparable flower-land he has left behind :

> Meadows of England shining in the rain
> Spread wide your daisied lawns.

So Rupert Brooke ached for home among the too well-regimented flowers of Germany :

> Just now the lilac is in bloom,
> All before my little room :

that lilac, by the way, which T. S. Eliot views with the dyspeptic eye of the post-1918 mood in the opening of *The Waste Land* :

> April is the cruellest month, breeding
> lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> memory and desire, stirring
> dull roots with spring rain.
> Winter kept us warm. . . .

Of the landscape of " ordinary " English wild flowers, one of the most charming pictures is Edward Thomas's little poem *Adlestrop*. His train has stopped unexpectedly at a quiet wayside station :

> What I saw
> As Adlestrop, only the name,
> And willows, willowherb, and grass,
> And meadowsweet and haycocks dry,
> No whit less still and lonely fair
> Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

The luxuriance of summer hedgerows is painted in a passage of typical Meredithian lushness in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* : " Leaving brightest footprints upon thickly-wooded banks, where the foxglove's last upper bells incline, and bramble shoots wander among moist rich herbage." George Eliot, in *Adam Bede*, speaks of " wandering through the still lanes when the fresh-opened blossoms fill them with a sacred, silent beauty like that of fretted aisles."

Tennyson's poetry is full of homely flowers : " The little

speedwell's darling blue," "The wild marsh-marigold shines like fire in swamps and hollows gray," and the thought of the transience of one's own life as set against the flowers' continually-renewed immortality:

> Tho' I should die, I know . . .
> Not less the bee would range her cells,
> The furzy prickle fire the dells,
> The foxglove cluster dappled bells.

Here seems to be the secret of the flowers' abiding hold over man's affections and their consequent place in literature. It is not so much their sheer beauty, of form, scent, or colour, as what they stand for: symbol of spring-time resurrection and the loveliest manifestation of the universal law of mutability, of death and rebirth, which comes charged with peculiar significance to man because he knows himself to be subject to it just as the flowers are. It is this eternal miracle of spring, the "flos de spina," "flower from the thorn," which inspired Dante's illustration of the unexpected development of character (*Paradiso* XIII, 133): "I have seen all the winter through the thorn display itself fierce and stiff, and then upon its crest carry the rose." Most typically English, perhaps, is its expression in the wish of Sir Thomas Overbury's milkmaid, quoted by Izaak Walton as a blessing upon "honest Maudlin" for singing to him: "All her care is she may die in the spring-time, to have store of flowers stuck upon her winding-sheet."

H. M. Wilson.

## A POLITICAL PRISONER

SO, with proud bearing and a ready wit
He won his life.
He reaped ten years of darkness thus, in place
Of a swift ending: And that he had acquired
These years, they that looked on him for trace
Of conquest or defeat saw but the tired
End of strife:
And the pale calm of it.

Pauline Procter.

# A NEW ROMANTICISM

GREAT literature could be defined as the union of realism and mystery. Yet work catering for either extreme alone will always more easily find a following, since every such union, though itself the justification of literature and secret of its eternal appeal, is, at first, baffling, if not repellent, to the age of its creation. The work of Francis Berry[1] is in this more comprehensive tradition.

The " romantics " laboured to reveal life and personality in the natural universe. Wordsworth's mountains are alive presences and Shelley's *Prometheus* dramatizes the awakening of Earth. Poetry in our day has concentrated on city-life and sordid detail. Now whereas this strain in Eliot (whom I do not suggest ever to have been *limited* to such effects) forces a rebound to Christian mysticism, Francis Berry advances to realization of the dormant magic within city streets themselves. His first published lyric significantly rates a barrel-organ above a cathedral, and is followed closely by a remarkable characterization of " King Lamp-post," head and shoulders, " like Saul " above men; feeling into its *personal* existence and starry imaginations, its dislike of summer and enjoyment of extended life through long winter nights. *The Beggar's Soul* vividly contrasts the outer appearance and barrel tune of a one-legged organ-grinder with a romantic soul-energy which arches up in victor-music towards spectacular and ecstatic chariot-mastery and triumphal speed in ancient Rome; to fall suddenly back, in the last line, to the limping, grinding melody in which those splendours are *implicit*. *The Sky-Rocket* pursues a similar course from a dirty bottle, through cosmic and " *cross*-spangling " brilliance, to a cabbage-patch.

To-day we hear much of " mechanization." But, whereas so much of recent poetry falsely, and no doubt quite

[1] Mr. Berry is twenty-five years of age and has published three small volumes: *Gospel of Fire*, Elkin Matthews & Marot, 1933; *Snake in the Moon*, Williams & Norgate, 1936; and *The Iron Christ*, Williams & Norgate, 1938. His last full-length work *Fall of a Tower* remains, at present, unpublished. Mr. Berry is at present serving as a private of the Devonshire Regiment in the Near East. Before joining the army he was studying at the University College of the South-West of England, Exeter.

unintentionally, subdues human vitality to dead mechanical analogies, we find here the reverse process, the mechanical being given its due rights of electric and explosive, and often most beautiful, vitality, as in *A Ride in a Sports Car*:

> Streamlined aluminium chastity—
> O Artemis of the Great West road,
> Shifting silver secrets as she flies.
> Her tonneaux like the breasts of foam-born
> Cytherean, furnaced in the factory.
> Wheel-wings Juno-wristed: O miracle
> Of man-made majesty.

A child-like sense of wonder, perhaps the greatest of all poetic qualities, is maintained. Now clearly so powerful a vitalization of mechanic energy may also—my former objection negated—act *in service to* human life. In *Adam and Eve* a richly varied and semi-humorous approach compares Eve to "a piece of the moon," her eyes to "unsounded lunar craters," with black hair falling "like a Congo cascade"; and, next, her veins are "runnels" through a "marble desert" littered with relics of dark paganism ("tipped-up Dagons, tripped and tumbled-over Magogs"), or—skipping the centuries and narrowing the emphasis to our own place and time—like

> Quicksilver injected into limestone
> Swerving and sizzling with a droning fury
> Like that stinging insect called mosquito
> Singing, winging, ringing in the aural orifice.
> Or like the road-drill spurting sperm through concrete,
> Screeching elixir through a grinding surface—
> Such were Eve's veins.
> Magnetic wires twisted by turbines,
> Lacing and lashing her flesh in livid ecstasies.

In contrast, sun against moon, we have Adam a "red man," his blood sun-fired, savage and with "blazing eyes":

> This Adam must have been a hairy-chested man,
> Making the woodland bracken wobble on its weedy stalks
> To feel him breaking through in vehement venery,
> With spear in knuckling grasp—until he foamed
> At the flat sight of an inland lake
> Befooled, with dragonflies and heather round him.

Moon and sun preside mischievously over the sexual encounter of which they are themselves cosmic architypes :

> Sniggering and errant moon ! putting out her tongue
> To smoothe her chapped lips, deceitfully :
> " You're in the know !—stainer of honours."

So Moon addresses Sun. Remembering Milton, we might regard the poem as iconoclastic. But the end holds a compacted romantic pregnancy at once continuous with and interpretative of the rest :

> Then Eve received Adam unto her,
> While the mist walked round like a wraith,
> And the birds sang
> And the rose closed with a final puff of perfume.

The compressed vigour is never purely mental, and never ornamental, but nature-rooted and organic, like the thick heart of a cabbage or a tightly-folded rose-bud.

Francis Berry's poetry is rooted in the darkest centres of the human psyche. It twines deep into physical promptings, deeper than Lawrence, to a level where of living writers John Cowper Powys alone provides an analogy ; as in *The Dark Inhabitant* and the title-poem, *Snake in the Moon*, the latter especially rich in hot sensuous magic. Such Astarte-wisdom attains full contemporary impact and daylight projection in the complex fusion of *Photograph*. Here marvels of man's inventive genius serve a naïve sensuousness, with a cheap advertisement photo shot through by cosmic mystery. The poem pierces conventional thought-trappings of " vulgarity " and money-business to the naked simplicity of the picture's immediate affect. Compression of phrase and easy cohabitation of usually disparate realms are not self-consciously forced but well from a depth allowing expression of superb ease :

> How the camera's enchanted eye
> Can capture heaven with a violent wink !

And,

> The camera with his artist chivalry
> Gives me his piercing flash of focus rapture :
> Though you adorn an opening sheet
> Of an illustrated social weekly,
> Advertising underwear,—

However mean the purpose of that poise,
Now I admire the camera's darting fire
That shook the hot heart of the universe
And gave its bodied beauty
In a bare instant.

The picture makes us "forgive" the "greasy palm" and "staly craft" of "counters," "cashiers," "cheques and bills":

And if I meet that rotund business-man,
I'll say, You surely advertise
Not corset-wear, but Paradise!

The subject might be called trivial, the instincts involved are those usually termed "baser." But the poem ends in a vivid self-interpretation, with the swiftness of a camera's action capturing and revealing the immensities such catch-words disguise:

With a mere click
The camera conceiving you
Was as a giant in seizure
Who turning to the ground beneath his feet
Beheld another hemisphere of stars.

The poetry of Francis Berry itself acts, precisely, as such a camera.

His range is remarkable, with no personal taboos. In *Virgin under the Moon*, addressed by a devotee to Artemis, chastity is celebrated with equal fervency. His mythological resource, instinctive as Keats's, is rich and varied, going beyond the Hellenic to oriental paganisms and Norse myth, and with strong use of Old Testament themes in *The Book of the Prophet* and *Moses and the Curate*. From these emerge certain striking short poems on Christ, *Lama Sabachthani*, and one, perhaps even more powerful, at present unpublished; which brings us to his most important published work, *The Iron Christ*.

So inclusive an imagination and so direct a response to *energies* makes a poetry peculiarly able—as the restricted viewpoints of our accepted front-line poets have not been able—to master and interpret the dominant issues of world-affairs to-day. Francis Berry's *Iron Christ* is the only deeply relevant war-poem of our time. Its subject is the referring

of a dispute between the Argentine and Chile to the British throne for arbitration and a consequent making from guns of a Christ-figure to be grounded on a mountain frontier separating the disputants. The imaginative setting is vast, especially in mountain-description of a rugged grandeur kin to the giant conceptions of Robinson Jeffers. The verse itself is craggy and unpolished and certain periods almost over-insistent in unrelieved accumulation of phrase on battering phrase. But the fusion of contemporary realism and cosmic vastness under the aegis of Christian *power* is of all possible endeavours the most prophetically significant for us, and one for which the more limited equipments of contemporary poetic tendencies—especially those with a mainly social or *purely* religious background—are inadequate. Such self-sufficing schemes are here blasted by deeper poetic reverberations. Age-long lust for land-possession is felt as inevitably controlling

> A nation as an individual,
> Until the earth itself shall catapult
> Its humming weight against a rival order.

Or again :

> The steady hammer of eternity
> Nails a crisis to the present hour.

Or, in a more relaxed, softer mode :

> Wombs are wonderful, the one that wrought
> Young Jesus, those that wrought the first white whales. . . .

Such over-spanning poetic range alone reaches the perspective necessary to a profound diagnosis.

Here is a vivid poetic capturing, through a rich marshalling of pause and repetition, internal assonance and jingle, of national war-awakening :

> People turn like tides to speeches, move
> More quickly, blood in tension, hope of change
> To purpose, promise of heroic blush.
> Masses pool town-squares in swirls, relief
> Translates a sacred wish to words : To kill,
> Assert the fist—to kill—to crown our race
> With virile name, we'll kill, embrace the iron
> Of gun or helmet, rejoice in pounding loins
> Of squat-mast battleship. We'll kill, we'll kill
> To pride the kinship, ancient breed, our blood and soil.

Man-march to kill, the ranks and tanks and flanks,
The cheers, big stance of warrior, recoil and rear
Of rifle-gear, artillery, the bursting fear
Observes race-pride, man-might. Assert and kill,
Hear ancient songs, the brass bands' patriot thrill,
Blood and soil. We'll kill.

The Andes stare down, standing in the cold still.

And here is our diagnosis :

Agony, frustrations, lonely hours,
Drowned hope, the many omens shouting Yield,
Withered understandings, throat-sob at night,
Unforgiving tortures, need resolve.
So wars come.
No other way than this ? With lighted eyes
Be dishonest, be the virile child,
Drug disappointment with a warrior poise . . .

Poetic realization and psychological penetration are inter-affective.

The Christ-making *from guns* is cleverly manipulated as expressive of regeneration with power, while the agony content of the process, with the flames' pagan " clamour for victim," serves to preclude any facile play on surface-deep Christian associations :

Thighs lifted from the mass,
Horny torso set in place
Dripping with its natal grease
Bit by bit emerges It,
Gun, Iron, Man, Christ.

The effigy is taken out, and up. It is, at first, no pretty figure, with witness of " crucible embroilings " and " agony in wet froth," and oils still torturing the brow ; yet within its very stillness lurks a " typhoon power." Its creative suffering may be allowed to symbolize the agony of Europe to-day. The railway mountain-climb is a slow, midnight, laborious Calvary through jungle :

A wild-cat spits,
Eyes focus, green fury, glaze ; screech from red throat ;
It vanishes.

At last " mouth-bleeding " guns thunder and rethunder on their " heavy haunch " the echoing triumph of the slowly raised Christ, from horizontal to perpendicular,

cutting the constellations. War-power is thoroughout *incorporated*, and past violences of imagery exactly condition the final, sun-impregnated stature :

> And then over the clear horizon came the rising sun, shaping itself bigger and clearer and fresher in the air. Expanding in yellow radiance, he asserted morning-glory, so majestically he moved up. Kingly joy. He marshalled like mellow cadences his beams on the snow, directing wild light in a rich deploy which startled condors (who had already had a bad night) into the air. The long, pale, but warming, rays struck a Lapland brilliance, a casket glitter, on that weary snow world, so high, high up, so that the ice began to gleam, and the men of Argentine and the men of Chile embraced each other, the light in their eyes. In ever-swelling Andean pride the sun rose, and focussed on the Christ. The beams embroidered on his massive dark mouldings, playing caresses on his thighs, flooded his chest, burnished : and last the sun looked into the Iron Christ's eyes, and on the balls fixed a mild blaze.

Even so, to prevent any too-simple trust in the finality of social progress, we conclude with sight of the rock-implanted Man of Iron eternally fronting sun and stars amid mountain solitudes that distantly promise, not a world, but a " *universe* without wars " ; as though the earthly problem were all but insoluble and man's troubled destiny involved, inexorably, in some greater order.

Much fine poetry is written in a minor key, with its own provisional doctrine, social, philosophic, or creedal ; and it would be foolish to deny to such its peculiar, if limited, values. But there is a greater poetry ; and we are lucky if, once in a generation, a poet arises who " by sovereignty of nature " not only turns out his own " burning atoms of inextinguishable thought," but reveals those cosmic energies and significances prisoned within the most trivial and atomic experience ; not so much generating as *releasing* power and the spirit of wonder wherever his muse wanders, like Keats's moon " with silver lip kissing dead things to life." He alone, warming, to use Landor's famous phrase, " *both* hands " before the fires of existence and touching at every point the universal heart, can properly handle the apparently greater issues and relate truly the actions of nations to the ultimate destinies of mankind.

G. Wilson Knight.

# CAMBRIDGE POETRY AND NICHOLAS MOORE

I HAVE never met Nicholas Moore, though he has sent me hundreds of letters or brief postcards like: "Are you mad or am I?" I replied that he was. But the peculiar thing about Nicholas Moore is that about four times a year a complete stranger comes up to me and says: "You publish Nicholas Moore in your magazine?" I reply "Yes, I do." He then says: "I was at school with Nicholas Moore." I continue: "Oh, what does he look like? It has always interested me." The stranger invariably pauses for a moment and then says very slowly: "Well, he looks rather odd." And I am left wondering whether this is a publicity stunt.

The point is that each time I have dipped into *Cambridge Poets* 1940 (Hogarth Press, 6s.) I have felt that Nicholas Moore has influenced nearly all of them, so much so that I am almost tempted to look here for his personality, jumbling together the "blunt and inarticulate hand" of Alexander Comfort, the "arrogant angular head" of M. J. Craig, perhaps the "queer morals in red pyjamas" of Stephen Coates, to make finally the "tall and slender, particular man" of George Scurfield. It is true enough, I think, to say that Nicholas Moore has either made Cambridge poetry or perverted it, or led it up the airy mountain.

> Yet on the crags tomorrow sees tomorrow,
> The sun that rises on the shaggy mountain
> Sending a cool look to the light blue eyes
> Brings to the world a powerful stop to sorrow
> And man's adventure lies in the sunrise.

These poets according to the introductory note "would all like to write some form of contemporary legend." Putting them together in a lump I think it can be said that they do. They form a legend of the doomed, a legend of the gay, careless, brave, delightful to talk to and often affectionate young men who are to be found in greater quantities around Oxford and Cambridge than anywhere else. These are the young who think, who rebel against traditions of parents lost in history, revel perhaps in music, literature or art, can be merry sometimes as a gesture, are never understood by

the old. And these in war-time are the most inevitably lost, all their ideals drowned in the blood they sacrifice for causes they do not particularly care for, or support only because that is the heroic or the tragic thing to do. So have these young Cambridge Poets combined to make a legend not so much of themselves as of the great crowd of their contemporaries. Mark Holloway jests :

> Où sont les neiges de yesteryear
> The dodo, the yak and the stuffed polar bear ?

E. V. Swart finishes his " Walk on to Headland Height "—

> O black gull, black gull,
> Whose effortless conversion into wind
> Amazes, teach us from land release,
> That sharp taking to air where no flattery is,
> And we be as one, who drifting down there,
> Is drifting as power would drift over sea face.

And Terence Tiller :

> Dumb as the fate we fear, all understood,
> the golden mirror cannot say a word.

Alexander Comfort writes their epitaph :

> And friend or foe this tall lad went
> Down to the green eye and supple fin
> And we who raise the monument
> In London or Berlin
> Inscribe thereon " To save his age
> He spent the youth we made him give—
> Give thanks. Perhaps your sons will live
> To share his privilege."

As to others : John Bateman " On an engraving by Albert Durer " suggests a very fine mediaeval nightmare. Maurice James Craig, an Irishman, has written one of the book's best poems in " Elegy on a Dying Attitude." Jock Moreton almost out-Hopkins Hopkins in " Salmon " ; and I like Gervase Stewart's " Alone."

One never quite knows where Nicholas Moore is going. He describes himself :

> I, under the shadow of gun and glory, who sit in a still room
> In a quiet house with my words and my lifted pen,
> Meek and minute as a mouse in a ring of wood,
> Sit shuddering in the shadows of a million lion-hungry and mouse-haunted men.

Moore has a warm lyricism and a fine word sense, but it is a pity that he often seems to force himself to be violent and to rant. I like " Tell me in Flame."

*Cambridge Poetry* is a book worth buying though I wonder whether after the war it may not have a post prandial flavour. It will be interesting to see how these poets later come to compare with the Oxford lot. As a rival team I would select Herbert Howarth, John Short, Alan Rook, J. C. Hall, Keith Douglas, Philip John Stead, Andrew Murray, Norman Bradshaw, Terence Heywood, Miles Vaughan Williams and Margaret Stanley-Wrench.

JOHN WALLER.

During the last war Sir Edward Marsh was a perfervid Georgian, successfully sponsering poets who have now passed into oblivion. Now he has turned Horatian, and indulging in an older game, he offers elegant re-translations of the famous Odes that have exercised the metrical skill and ingenuity of hundreds of scholarly or dilettant predecessors (Macmillan 6s.). Reading these latest renderings as English verse, with great diversity of metres and rhymes and moods, rather than as comparable exercises in academic translating, we can appreciate a dextrous literary service, done with ingenuity and felicity, for which some credit is given to our admirable contributor, Mr. Ronald Fuller, " who has weighed every line and every word."

To Lord Camrose thanks for recognizing the value of a wisely compiled anthology in wartime and for entrusting the making of one to that distinguished *Daily Telegraphist*, Mr. J. B. Firth. *A Daily Telegraph Miscellany* (Hutchinson, 3s. 6d.) is a judiciously packed pocket book of almost 500 pages of fine poetry and prose, encouraging, healing, hopeful, cheerful passages describing and recording the aspirations and achievements of famous and fanciful men and women, of England and the year's round, deepening the spiritual life, defining the philosophic mind, restoring tranquillity to the distracted, a very apt and cogent collection.

*Here and Now* (Favil Press, 2s.) is a collection edited by our R.A.D.A. enthusiast, Sylvia Read, of verse, prose and drawings by a group of nine young people, providing a characteristic modernist exhibition, thereby acquiring considerable significance and deserving more consideration than the size of the brochure (32 pp.) may seem to justify. An attempt " at saying something new " is apparent in the impressionistic free verse statements, but the most individual and effective poems are those in skilful, cadenced metres with not always precise rhymes by a Balliol scholar of eighteen.

*TO ENGLAND FROM AMERICA:*

Selected from the many eloquent tributes in verse recently received from POETRY REVIEWERS in the United States.

## LONDON, 1941

THE evil men and envious who try
To smite the city that is glory's home
Know not the city's soul. Beneath the sky
Their fury lights, the ghost of Wren must roam

And, if the dead have tears, his tears may flow,
Seeing the brooding cross of Old St. Paul's,
Seeing the city of his making glow
Beneath the rain of fiery bombs which falls.

And yet, if he could speak to those who hold
Their constant winged defence above her ways,
He would not speak of ruin, . . . but unfold
The long, long tale of London's ancient days.

For she is old and proud and unafraid ;
She has known pain before, and fire, and death ;
Not in a hurried hour was London made—
And not a hurried hour shall still her breath.

Mother of Cities, brooding where she stands
Shielding her garnered treasures, dearly won—
Not any hosts from any alien lands
Shall come between her and the rising sun !

Chicago. BEVERLEY GITHENS.

## THIS ENGLAND

THIS England, that by land and air and sea
To-day is fighting back each savage blow,
Is that same England in whom liberty
Was first conceived and nurtured long ago.

This is her renaissance ; this is her gauge
Of fitness for survival. She is resolved

If war must be the ransom for this age
To ransom it, nor count the costs involved.

Though England fights alone she will not fail!
For in this hour of her Gethsemane
The spirit of her children does not quail
But lustres her with immortality.

Cleansed by her "blood and toil and tears and sweat"—
A commonweal from cottage door to throne—
Into the future looms a Britain yet
The greater for the suffering she has known!

Oakland, California. VENORA BOYD DUNCAN.

## THIS IS YOUR HOUR!

THIS is your hour, O Mothers of England!
You, with stout hearts and souls undismayed;
Though waters surge around and about you,
You know the Haven where fears are allayed.

You will remember, Mothers of England!
Nor will you forget when all words are said:
That men will ever crusade for a Cause,
Nor count the cost of sacrificial dead.

This is the hour. The Word has been spoken;
This is the signal to safeguard the Light;
You will not fail, O Mothers of England!
Faith walks with you throughout the darkest night.

San Francisco. ELIZABETH HOWE HARRIS.

## BOMBERS OVER BRITAIN

LIKE birds of prey, they tear this treasured Isle,
Its memoried temples and its huddled homes.
They hurl the snuggled baby from its crib,
Splinter the easy-chair that comforts age,
And make men sleep in graves before they're dead.
Shriek your swan song pitiless birds of prey!

You cannot sear our souls, or cheat our hopes,
Uproot our faith embedded in this rock,
Despoil the fruits of freedom in our hearts,
Nor fling our courage in the cratered mud.
We will emerge triumphant from this dust.

San Francisco. SUE HALL LANGSTROTH.

## BALLOON BARRAGE

WINDS over London
Blowing—blowing—
Strange weird music
Coming—going—

Balloons over London
Humming—humming—
The wind in their cables
Whistling—strumming—

Men over London
Hearing—fearing—
The singing balloons, and
People—cheering.

Sangus, Mass. ETHEL BAILEY MEARS.

## IN ENGLAND

THE joyous lark no longer sings at "Heaven's gate"
In England;
In fringes of the meadow grass he cowers low,
In England.

The dragon's whelps breathe ghastly fire and sudden death,
On England;
Base Grendel's mother, mad for blood, befouls the waves
Round England.

But Beowulf rides the hell-tossed infested seas
Round England,
His deathless spirit shall prevail against the dragon brood
O'er England.

And soon the lark shall soar, upborne on glad free wings
O'er England,
To voice a clear, sweet paean to a fairer day
In England.

Austin, Texas. DELIA DOOLE.

## MODERN MIRACLE

(*Retreat from Dunkirk, June* 1940)

THE hosts of Satan, pressing five to one,
Against strong valour of retreating lines;
Fantastic horror blotting out the sun—
All sure annihilation's potent signs;
Beside the reddened beaches, little boats
That shuttle shore to shore, defying hail;
That courage for the right which, fighting, quotes
All fighters for a cause that cannot fail;
And on that channel, synonym for storm,
A glassy surface, friend to their retreat;
And fog, well out of season, like a warm
Protecting blanket, comforting and sweet
To stubborn faith that crosses a grey sea
As others crossed a red—led equally;
And still the Unseen Captain leads them, strong
To conquer Hate, although the fight be long.

Long Island. GRACE BUCHANAN SHERWOOD.

## SAINT GEORGE

THE gates of Heaven open, Lord;
Let flags of right be now unfurled;
Saint George is needed with his sword—
A dragon's loose upon this world.

Let him ride down before his van
Upon his charging, neighing steed,
Returning to this earth of man
In this her darkest hour of need.

Chicago. JOHN E. GROVES.

# DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: LXXXIX

Clyde Robertson, National Poetry Chairman of The National League of American Pen Women, presents ballads about gold in *The Yellow Witch* (Loker Raley, New York).

Mrs. Robertson writes me :

> "I do not believe I have anything to say for myself which regards poetry, otherwise than I believe 'a shoemaker should stick to his last.' I write western ballads because I know the West and ballads seem to be my forte. I have the feeling however that I have left everything unsaid that I wish to say. The futility of trying to express in words one's feelings weighs on me more and more as time goes on. This devastating European war and the terrible plight of our English friends and relatives make one so miserable."

Discriminating critics speak with compliment about the work of Mrs. Robertson. William Rose Benet,—his closing sentence is his comment :

> " Her knowledge is first hand. She handles material thoroughly familiar to her and she can write a sturdy, hearty ballad that has real bite."

It is difficult to quote from ballads. The story of Lonesome Louie opens the collection. From one of the stanzas we give the following :

" Let him alone," the Deacon said,
" Let him sweat in his pine-box bed ;
We'll haul him down at dawn to-morrow
To the meetin' house and then we'll borrow
The Parson's pick and stow him away
In the Potter's Field till the judgment day.
No prayin', now, can save his skin,
We'll dig a hole and shovel him in."

And we meet the Mistress of the Matchless Mine. In the Gold Rush leads us to Leadville—

On to Leadville ! Over the Pass
Where the glaring snow is hard as glass.
Swear and sweat and cheat and hate,
Gamble and guzzle, lust and mate.

Shootin' Sue we shall not forget :

That's how the camp of Breckenridge
Got rid o' Shootin' Sue ;
For the parson sentenced her for life,
(Like parsons always do)—

The Woman in The Wagon is remembered with a thrilling ballad.

The theatre of our time owes an immense debt to Maxwell Anderson. His *Eleven Verse Plays* (Harcourt Brace and Co., N.Y.), spirited and entertaining projections of eminent persons, rank high, both as stage-craft and literature. The stage and literature go hand in hand in

Maxwell Anderson's verse dramas. A list follows: *Elizabeth the Queen, Night Over Taos, Mary of Scotland, Valley Forge, Winterset, The Wingless Victory, High Tor, The Masque of Kings, The Feast of Ortolans, Second Overture, Key Largo.* The scalpel of the artist clearly and deftly bodies forth the characters in these dramas and the reader is not obliged, as often, to turn to the cast to learn who is speaking.

There are illuminating lines in the plays that cover a wide experience. Mary of Scotland, speaking with Bothwell:

> "It is too late—
> For you and me. These faults we commit have lives
> Of their own, and bind us to them."

And again—Mary cries:

> "God help me and all women
> Here in this world, and all men. Fair fall all chances
> The heart can long for—and let all women and men
> Drink deep while they can their happiness. It goes fast
> And never comes again, Mine goes with you,
> Youth, and the fund of dreams, and to lie a while
> Trusted, in arms you trust. We're alone, alone,
> Alone—even while we lie there we're alone,
> For it's false. It will end. Each one dies alone."

To Mary, Elizabeth speaks in a later act:

> "It may be they were forged.
> But will that matter, Mary, if they're believed?
> All history is forged."

And who among theatre goers can forget the happiness and wretchedness in *Elizabeth the Queen*?

Anderson's play *Valley Forge* moves rapidly on, holding completely one's attention. Personally, Anderson's Washington does not happen to be mine. His sentences do not seem to belong to him but the whole play is fraught with emotion and concern. Very fitting are many of the sentences for this moment, when the reasons for war are much discussed all over the world. Washington's comment on war follows:

> "Has it escaped you, sir, that we fight this war
> against usurpation of power? Should I usurp
> the powers of Congress, which gave me what power
> I have,
> I'd have nothing left to fight for.
> * * *
> It happens that our Congress is the heart of
> what we fight for, good or bad, and I uphold it."

Magnificent is the statement attributed to Lafayette:

> "Shall I begin by saying something you know, but may have forgotten?
>
> "This world you have cut from a wilderness, is a new world, brighter with sun in summer, colder with winter cold than the world I knew.

" The air's strange-sharp, the voice rings here with a hard ring.

" I find no man but looks you in the eye and says his thought in your teeth, and means it.

" This was not known before on this star we inhabit.

" Europe has thirty kings and a hundred million slaves.

" But here in this land each man's a king, and walks like a king, each woman bears herself regally, like a queen.

" You will find this is not easy to throw away.

" The air of this coast has fired your blood, and while three among you, no more than three, hold hard against the old masters, the kingdoms lessen and dwindle.

" They've felt your breath and feared it, in the old world.

" Lose ! Now the gods in heaven hear me, you cannot lose ! "

A very practical view of war is contained in Mr. Harvey's statement :

" A war, my friend, is a tactical expedient to gain certain political ends. Those ends being proved impossible, the war's without excuse, and should be pushed no further than need be to gain an advantageous peace."

And so on through these verse plays, great dramas greatly told.

Following quickly on the heels of the *Orange Feather*, Isabel Fiske Conant gives us *Window Shopping* (Kaleidograph Press, Texas). Mrs. Conant has valuable connections, a Wellesley graduate, member of the MacDowell Club and Colony, New England Poetry Club and the Copley Society ; lecturer as well as poet and much beloved.

" Browning in Asolo " attracts us :

Picture him, pacing Venice, or Perugia,
Or Casa Guidi, up from Arno's shore
Or Asolo in April, through the loggia,
Pondering Prospice, or, One Word More.
Conqueror of Wimpole Street . . . this was a lover
Deserving the divinely-shaken breath
And this was he who finally won over
His woman and his queen Elizabeth.

Enchanted loggia, up in Asolo !
That once he called " the happiest room I know "
Where phrases came, impelled, the spirit sundering,
Lyric, yet burdened with a cosmic thundering ;
Waters that charm the spirit to glad drowning
In your wild, singing glory, Robert Browning.

This reviewer, hailing from the little town of Bennington, Vermont, asks you to read " Green Mountain State "—

Vermont, New England's only state
Without a coast-line's curve of shore
Is beautiful enough, and great
With all she has ; what need of more ?

She keeps her personality
And more of her primeval health
And early upland liberty,
Than any other commonwealth.

Vermont, proud of her hills and sons,
And one awhile the nation's chief,
Herself is of the sea, that once
Was where is now her topmost leaf
That might have its contended site
On more than one green mountain's height.

I am glad to hear that following my previous quotations of Mrs. Conant's poetry her poems are being used in English schools and verse-speaking auditions.

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

DR. DAVID HENRY KYES, author, poet, lecturer, addresses A VALENTINE TO THE POETS CLUB OF CHICAGO:

Transcendent Club, how much we owe to you!
Inspiring minds to soar from earth to sky,
Your stirring dates make weeks go swiftly by.
Then we convene to fathom and review
Men's thoughts and aspirations, and imbue
Supreme ideals. For poets frame displays
Like showers of stars that man with joy surveys,
And thanks the Lord for forces none subdue.
Who weighs the cultures stressed by our group,
Or knows their full extent! Who estimates
Their sway! We meet to hearten and recoup,
To shape life plans from skill that captivates.
To you, dear Club, who *can* discharge his debt!
When stars are cold your work shall function yet.

CLARA FAIRFIELD PERRY (New York): I enclose cheque for twenty-five dollars, with my deepest sympathy for England during these dark hours, but with the firm conviction that her magnificent courage will, with America's aid, bring her a triumphant victory!

GRACE BUCHANAN SHERWOOD (Long Island): I enclose my subscription for the current year and I do want to take the opportunity of telling you how particularly inspiring I find the wonderful way in which your Society, in common with other organisations, are carrying on as usual under conditions in England at this time.

LAURA EMILY MAU (Atlantic City, N.J.): I appreciate THE POETRY REVIEW more than words can express, and think it is the very best poetry magazine in the world.

*To the Editor:*

## DEFENCE OF AGE

Why all this pitifulness for Age,
As though the pale concluding page
Of this our earthly pilgrimage
Were nothing but an empty sheet,
True life foregone, with weak tears we ,
As though at even men ceased to live.

Youth's eager vigours are no more,
The hard-worn casket strained and sore.
Yet the bright inward Spirit blooms
With essences of life-perfumes
Undimmed by the assault of years,
Unwatered by eve's tears.

Many the lamps with flame outspent ;
Yet the abiding testament
Of scholar, soldier, leader cries
The tale of dotage and dimmed eyes
In Britain, now, a weave of lies,
Where greybeard with winged youth outvies
And the bright tongues of flame alight
On those who gird us to the fight.

There is a backward vision o'er
The road so blindly trod before,
Lighting the signpost read awry,
The broken tryst, the unheeded sigh.
Could we but lead him by the hand,
That youth who marred our wonderland !

But still the face of sun and moon
Is sweet as in the heart's high noon,
Still wondrous is the cuckoo's call,
And Spring's recurring festival :
Keep but a not-too-busied tread
Along the slackening river bed
Outflowing to Life's fuller sea.

Still there are valleys for the rover,
New worlds of thought to ponder over,
New books, new pictures, new delight
Of music trembling on the height

Of Joy, untouched by dark defeat.
So much, so many things to know,
To see, to savour and to do,
The road shall not be darkened yet ;
Until we come to that steep gate
Which none may miss, and follow through :
—More hills to climb, more work to do,
More love, more life, more hope. . . .

I have written this poem " Defence of Age " as a challenge to the poetry which represents the oncoming and state of Old Age to be unrelieved tragedy and dotage. I feel that however beautiful a poem may be, the chief essence of poetry is Truth. It is not just to draw the picture of a universal human tragedy which only happens to the few. The lines

" a lump of cold redundant clay
with twitching lips and toothless gums,
that sits before the fire all day
mumbling and sucking sugar plums "

conjures up a picture as ugly as it is, in the main, untrue. Anyhow, we all of us buy a good set of teeth these days !

In the same issue you speak of Thomas Hardy, who wrote many of his best poems after he was eighty. We have still Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells doing fine work. Sir Oliver Lodge never deteriorated mentally. I think that our Prime Minister, who uses our language so finely, is not likely to be a dotard twenty years hence. The generals who are too old to fight are joining the Home Guard, regardless of their former rank.

Nor is it among the greater minds only that a vigorous old age is found. It is common in this small village to hear that an old woman over seventy " does all her own work," or an old man can walk so many miles. Perhaps you have noticed that the Ministry of Food have received a letter of recipes from a woman of eighty-five, and have published one of her hints. We have a photo of a great-aunt of my husband's aged 104, working at her lace pillow without the aid of glasses. The old lady enjoyed her supper beer to the last. There is a letter in the *Daily Telegraph* suggesting the opening of small local factories at which women over fifty, sixty or even seventy can work, to help the war effort. No, I am convinced that the dotage of old age is exceptional, and should not be represented as a universal tragedy.

On the contrary, unless one's mental development has stopped at school-leaving age, one's comprehension and enjoyment of poetry, music and the visual arts becomes ever wider and deeper. So also should one's sympathy with humanity and human problems.

I suppose that Edith Walker's poem is based on Yeats' lovely sonnet, " When you are old and gray and full of sleep," which itself seems a

variation on Ronsard's Sonnet to Hèléne, " Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir, à la chandelle," Perhaps when Youth has experienced a successful love life old age seems saddest. But I think true wisdom is expressed in the note to Ruth Pitter's poem.

It (the contemplative mind) builds its own nest lightly and cheaply, and laments not if it decays, for the heart is not soon broken that bows to the law of disintegration, and refuses to delay the spring by seeking to retain the autumn.

I find Ruth Pitter's poem an amazingly satisfying expression of that spirit in nature which is, at times, one's only refuge from the storms of life.

Wakefield, March 28th. DULCIE EDEN GREVILLE.

## MR. FLEMING AND THE TAR BABY

*" Two voices, are there : one is of the deep . . .*
*And one is of a blind, old, silly sheep*
*That bleats that grass is green and water wet,*
*And Wordsworth, both are thine."*

Mr. Vandemere Fleming will, I feel sure, forgive me if I begin my reply to his last letter with a quotation of his own choosing. But this last article of his was so full of inaccuracies, sneers, and misunderstandings of what seemed to me to have been stated so clearly, that I could not help thinking that he was like a man entangled with a tar baby and that it remained for me only to clear away the camouflage over the pits of deception that he had so carefully dug in the hope that in the difficulties of another his own discomfort might be the less easily observed.

When for instance I referred to the *Quarterly Review's* attack on " Endymion," Mr. Fleming sneers that I might have added " Blackwoods " if I had known. Now I should have thought it was clear that I referred to a specific article in the *Quarterly*—namely their review of *Endymion* which I had read. As this same article could not have appeared in more than one magazine, I see no point in dragging in " Blackwoods." Mr. Fleming continues to the effect that I evidently did not know that at the time of this article *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, the great Odes, etc., were not written. As I neither mentioned nor referred to those poems, I feel that Mr. Fleming is only confusing the issue when he does so. If Mr. Fleming could have proved that *Endymion* was not written at the time of the *Quarterly's* condemnation he would have said something to the point, as *Endymion* was the only poem I discussed. But perhaps Mr. Fleming agrees with all that the *Quarterly* had to say on that occasion ? If this is so then indeed the fact goes a long way towards explaining his condemnation of Auden.

As to the list of great poets who I said had met with adverse criticism I would remind him that the list was not mine but his own. I am therefore not surprised that Mr. Fleming could not remember the

technical name of the "logical fallacy" he accused me of since I made none; and I think that if Mr. Fleming were to read the article I referred to (in the *Quarterly*, not *Blackwood's*) and there see *almost his own words* applied to Keats, he would find it difficult to deny this.

On the subject of Dunkirk I believe I said that I admired efficiency and success and that to me an unproductive withdrawal could represent neither of these things. Dunkirk marked the end of a failure, not like Thermopylae and Corunna the beginning of a success; it has been left to Wavell to make a new beginning elsewhere. I may remind Mr. Fleming that Winston Churchill has said of Dunkirk: "We must be very careful not to assign to this deliverance the attributes of a victory. Wars are not won by evacuations." Nor arguments by evasions.

With regard to Shakespeare I am glad that I can see the obvious fact —since it is clear that Mr. Fleming does not bother overmuch about it —namely that had this man been press ganged to serve on the Armada and lost his life "*the world might thereby have lost priceless things that were not yet born.*" Mr. Fleming clearly prefers that there should be a press gang than that the individual should make his own decisions or that genius should live.

I am sorry too that Mr. Fleming has avoided the real point of Clifford Dyment's poem, namely "Their arts they loved and would save," sorry too that he did not buy *Kingdom Come* and read my whole article, not merely the piece I quoted at him. But at least I thought I had made it clear that whether or not one resisted the Nazis was for the individual to decide, *for the individual to decide whether he be a great poet or a plumber*. I gave my reasons why I resisted and why I thought others should resist, but unlike Mr. Fleming I do not believe in compulsion. Therefore I will say again that no one has a right to force others to pursue a cause of action in which they do not believe. This, oddly enough, is one of the things I understand by the word "Freedom." And since Mr. Fleming has once more endeavoured to confuse the issue by raising the question of supervision to prevent great writers from injuring their health by excesses I will keep to that logic that Mr. Fleming so much admires and go on to say that "Freedom" allows the individual to indulge or not indulge just as he himself wishes.

Mr. Fleming claims to have called my bluff when he says that I made much of the fact that I had not fled to America (I did not do this; I merely explained why I had not, as it seemed to me that in my defence of Auden such an explanation was necessary) while all the time I was "still an undergraduate, presumably not qualified in any profession," and could therefore entertain no hope of "getting past the immigration inspectors on Ellis Island." Let me inform Mr. Fleming that I ceased to be an undergraduate when I took my degree even before Munich, that despite my youth I am qualified for at least three professions, that I held at one time a post on an American magazine. But going or not going to America does not seem to me to be the point. Those of my generation who do not share my reasons

for resisting the Nazis, presumably because they do not believe as I do that " the end justifies the means " have still the opportunity of being conscientious objectors. Therefore not only has Mr. Fleming not called my bluff, but he has not called the bluff of anybody. Let me now call his. I think that Mr. Fleming is a very comfortable old man, very happy in his comfort and very eager that everybody—whatever their opinions, whatever their genius—should fight in order that he may retain that comfort till the end. This is the " Manly and Elizabethan " attitude satirized by Keidrych Rhys in the Spring number of *Kingdom Come*.

" We are not of that spawn :
We who have seen No-Dawn
Painted by a generation
(Now commanding less veneration)
Whose symbol was Red Rose
Hardly an adult pose ! "

And this is what I mean by a people's war, a war not against Germans but against the spirit of fascism and compulsion *wherever it may be found*, a war for freedom in the real sense of the word, for the right of all to live. As a farewell gift I will end with the last paragraph of *Kingdom Come*'s spring editorial " To-morrow for the Young." " It is a new world that we must fight for, a new way of life, a time without fear and without reproach. We cannot always be playing in a sunlit garden in which the weeds are gradually and remorselessly choking the bright flowers ; for when the evening comes there will be nothing to comfort us, no morning to look forward to. This must be a war not merely against Germans but a war against the thought reflected by *The Times* newspaper, against the Royal Academy, the Albert Memorial, against the big drum element in Nationalism, against the bad film and the bad novel, against those who have opposed every progressive movement that has helped us, above all against that bureaucracy and bad politics which under cover of bogus patriotism or red tape has stifled the endeavour of everyman, produced official forms instead of action and said that we will do things in this way because they have always been done in this way. We must be bold, be young, go forward, break at last from the dead hand. For Auden has written :

" The stars are dead. The animals will not look.
We are left alone with our day, and time is short, and
History to the defeated
May say Alas but cannot help nor pardon."

Oxford JOHN WALLER.

[The Editor had intended to declare " This correspondence must now cease," but he recognizes that it is not merely an exchange of views and personalities between two opposing individuals but that it is a symbolical debate between protagonists of two generations, of

two irreconcilable schools of thought and action that should be defined openly and vigorously and that therefore this correspondence is of general interest and importance, and THE POETRY REVIEW is the proper arena for the combat.]

### "SAFETY FIRST!"

In all the correspondence that is swirling round the name of Auden may I venture to remark that one point has been overlooked by both sides—namely, the question of inspiration? At the moment danger is painting the English crocus a brighter gold and heroism has become a companion to many. No man or woman who runs away from this to safety is likely to be visited by inspiration. Christian philosophy teaches us that "he that findeth his life shall lose it." If anyone ever expected anything great from Mr. Auden surely that person is likely to be disappointed now.

One other point—if the majority of people in Britain suddenly decide to become pacifist and precious so that his hidey-hole is threatened also, where does Mr. Auden run to next?

The Glen, York, 24th March, 1941. PHYLLIS LYTH.

### POETS AND PATRIOTISM

Youth always is apt to blame the bungling of its elders for anything it finds uncomfortable. Mr. Alan Rook thinks that it is because of the blunderings of the old that he may have to risk his life in battle. But from the day on which he came of age, he has had just as much voice as I in choosing our law-givers and rulers. Moreover, it is Mr. Rook's generation which passed those widely advertised resolutions never to fight for King and Country, folly which greatly influenced the Nazis, making them believe that we British are a decadent, degenerate race.

I happened to write from *The Athenaeum*, and Mr. Rook, while promising to defend it, draws an imaginary picture of its inhabitants, somnolent old men with large watch-chains, luxurious surroundings, etc. Some day, perhaps, he will allow me to show him the reality. Scientific brains count in this war as never before, and I will point out to him scientists of world-renown, great chemists who know the last word in explosives, because they themselves spoke it, to the discomfort of Berlin, etc., or who risked a dreadful death in finding out how to combat poison-gas, or physicists to whose studies we owe it that our air-men have been able to achieve so much.

Mr. Rook, like Mr. Waller, quite misses the point of my remark that Shakespeare might have been pressed for service against the Armada, when he was a nobody of twenty-four. It is childishly obvious to say that if Shakespeare had been killed at that age we should not have had his works. The point of my illustration was this. Who is to decide which man is going to be so great a poet that he should not be called upon (or allowed?) to run any risk? Mr. Waller,

and presumably Mr. Rook, have a simple solution. Let the man be the judge of his own case. I await with interest any comment on my awkward argument that it follows logically that such a man must be put under stern tutors who will impose upon him austere rules of life. Song will, of course be allowed to Mr. Waller's poets—but Wine and Women, no !

Some few readers of THE POETRY REVIEW must have been startled to see *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* spoken of as if it were on the same level as *The Ode to a Nightingale*. Now, Britain is still, for the time being at least, a free country. People can hold all sorts of ridiculous beliefs. You can believe that the Earth is flat. Indeed (subject to your possibly having to be put under restraint), you can believe anything. I wish to speak with all due respect of Mr. T. S. Eliot. I know that he has written some minor poetry of real beauty. But undeniably he has perpetrated grotesque rubbish. Mr. Sparrow, in his scholarly and now classic *Sense and Poetry* (p. 144) quotes a specimen. Mr. Eliot, like his fellow American, Mr. Ezra Pound, whom he so much admires, owes no little of his renown to his supposed learning. In the March 1940 number of this REVIEW I gave reason for suspecting that Mr. Eliot's knowledge of Latin could not be more than elementary.

But here are some passages from the poem which Mr. Rook (I fear that he will blush and kick himself in riper years) apparently holds to be immortal :

" When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table."

How this " tickled the ears of the groundlings " ! And yet I find on investigation that only just over one in a thousand of the population can ever have seen " a patient etherised on a table." And how many of these people—doctors and nurses—are competent to say whether an anaesthetised patient (we need not trouble to ask whether ether was used) really did look like the evening-sky ?

Of course, if Mr. Eliot were to affirm that he himself had seen " an etherised patient on a table," I could take his imagery at its face-value.

But I suggest that the image is less true, has less appeal to a fundamental emotion of human nature, than one which P. G. Wodehouse attributes to one of his heroines. She, a healthy damsel, has been by accident marooned upon the lake of a country-house till painfully long past dinner-time. Her human emotion, ravenous hunger, moved her to compare the evening-sky with a lovely underdone joint of beef.

Here are some more gems from the Prufrock Love-Song :

" I grow old . . . I grow old. . . .
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.
Shall I part my hair behind ? Do I dare to eat a peach ?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach."

I have contended in these pages and elsewhere that a liking for " poetry " which to most people seems unintelligible, nonsensical, may be a symptom of the Narcissus-complex, a contention which merits

the attention of those modern poets who allege that poetry should to-day take account of the mental abysses which Freud and his rivals are supposed to have revealed. Those who like this stuff do so because subconsciously they feel a glow of pleasure to think that in finding meaning, often several various meanings, in the meaningless, they are proving their own cleverness, penetration, discernment, and fertility of imagination. A passage in the inaugural lecture of the Oxford Professor of Poetry seems to me to concur in my argument, which I have put into verse.

"In clotted nonsense some contrive to find
Beauty, and wisdom, and a master-mind.
Unconscious victims of self-flattery
They minister to their own vanity."

The Athenaeum, 4th April. EDWARD VANDERMERE FLEMING.

### DEPORTMENT IN CRITICISM

In the March-April number of THE POETRY REVIEW, E. M. Stephenson uses a word which perhaps ought to be stressed at the present time —the word is *deportment*. Any effort, such as THE POETRY REVIEW is at present making, to encourage this highly desirable quality, and to preserve such words as suggested is of value. It is agreed, of course, as Mrs. Stephenson implies, that deportment may be of many kinds; the deportment of an angel and the deportment of a panther and the deportment of a young man are all proper to themselves. But it is also worth noting that the high wrangle between different schools in poetry always has been going on and presumably always will. The immediately colloquial and immediately noble can hardly ever dine together in peace, except in the greatest genius. But I may be permitted to add that the introduction of the discussion of the personal morality of any reader at the present time seems to me undesirable and improper; that at least is not deportment.

Oxford University Press, April 2nd. CHARLES WILLIAMS.

### IN DEFENCE OF THE BEATEN TRACK

My voice is not, on this occasion, raised in controversial note. For, as I see it, there is for once nothing to argue about. The beaten track, remember, stretches forwards as well as backwards, and snatches of verse that trip in a familiar, every-day kitchen dresser sort of way off the tongue need not necessarily be confined to "the old chaps." I have every respect for modern poetry and the newest of the new—provided its aim is sincere and the result reasonably intelligible. But the pleasure and certainty beauty about well-known tags and snatches can as easily be gained from an intimate knowledge of Auden and Eliot as from Keats and Swinburne and all the rest of the gay, tripping, pre-Manley-Hopkins band.

Those much-quoted poems which, by their direct appeal to the man in the street rather than to the sweet selected few, have attained a

" boy stood on the burning deck " familarity, are much scoffed at by the alleged discerning critic. But every poem is new to begin with and the time may come, though personally I beg to doubt it, when Edith Sitwell's " goatish breezes " will trip as featly off the public tongue as Milton's much misquoted " fresh field and pastures new " does nowadays. The beaten track, perhaps discounting those first, faltering steps of school-days and well-edited Shakespeare, is a wide and generous path worn by enthusiastic feet and as such I defend it. There are things I know backwards and return to again and again and they never fail me.

The cataract of the cliff of heaven fell blinding off the brink,
As if it would wash the stars away as suds go down a sink;
The seven heavens came roaring down for the throats of hell to drink
And Noah he cocked his eye and said " It looks like rain, I think."

My Chesterton opens automatically at that page first! And then there's Wordsworth's well-worn sonnet on Westminster Bridge: " Earth has not anything to show more fair . . ." not to mention his host of golden daffodils who, unlike their more fragile sisters of the spring, dance through every anthology the whole year round.

" All the world's a stage," has reached proverbial fame but that can't alter the fact that it's Shakespeare at his most penetrating and satirical best. Nor will Keats' " Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness " wane with the years.

Laurence Binyon's verse must live forever though Armistice Days die out in despair:

They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old,
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We shall remember them.

Which vaguely, and probably quite illogically, reminds me of Clifford Dyment's wistful refrain " my luck is at the bottom of the sea,"—one of my own particular beaten tracks.

I admit that " Laugh and the world laughs with you " and its ilk reduce me to simmering incoherence, but why, with sweeping gesture, dismiss the well-known and oft'-quoted as banal and hackneyed just because it *is* well-known? To close, defiantly, on a cliché—don't let familiarity breed contempt.

The man who smokes,
Who reads the *Times*
And goes to Christmas pantomimes
Is (not always) capable of any crimes.

Totteridge, Herts. JOYCE T. ROWE.

### A CENTURY OF THOMAS HARDY

I have read the article on the above by Mr. Peel in the current issue of THE POETRY REVIEW, and cannot understand why this boosting of

Hardy. In my judgment Hardy was a novelist and not a poet in the real sense. He was an absolute pessimist, which I feel is contrary to the spirit of poetry. Surely if poetry has a message, it would be to inspire and encourage men and women, and what I have read of Hardy confirms me in the opinion that he had a grouse against life, and not the vision of its nobility.

" A senseless school, where we must give
Our lives that we may learn to live ;
A dolt is he who memorizes
Lessons that leave no time for prizes,"

which is neither good sense nor humorous.

Mr. Peel says :

" Jesus of Nazareth for instance, and Newton— " may be said to have lived ahead of their time, which is a creditable achievement—but Hardy's achievement is even more creditable.

How flattering, if it were true !

Jesus of Nazareth was far ahead of Hardy with enduring topicality.

" Peace upon earth," was said. We sing it,
And pay a million priests to bring it.—

Do we ?

Would it not be truer to say that Jesus of Nazareth laid the foundation of that " peace on earth," and more particularly in the Sermon on the Mount.

I wonder if Hardy had tried to understand that wonderful poem (for Jesus was a poet) in its practical application to human life. If Hardy's verdict is :

" For life I never cared greatly,"
As worth a wise man's while,

then I submit that Hardy is a failure.

I prefer the poetry of Jesus of Nazareth to that of Hardy, because there is vigour, optimism and inspiration in it, and something which makes human life sweet and wholesome.

I wonder, too, if Hardy considered the story of Job. Hardy says :

" If a way to the Better there be—it exacts "
A full look at the worst.

Well, if ever anyone did that, Job did, This is how Job met that experience :

" Behold I go forward, but he is not there."
And backward, but I cannot perceive him
On the left hand where he doth work
But I cannot behold him.
He hideth himself on the right hand.
That I cannot see him.
But he knoweth the way that I take.
When he hath tried me
I shall come forth as gold.

In these days men have no time for the pessimist, and the poet who

sees only the darkness, has already entered the dark shades of the Gateway of Oblivion.

Huddersfield, March 27th. ALBERT H. HODGES.

J. H. B. PEEL (Paymaster Lieutenant), Prestwood, Buckinghamshire, replies: Paper shortage discourages lengthy controversies, yet I feel that Mr. Albert Hodge's letter against my recent Hardy article needs a reply.

On re-reading the article in question, I find in it no trace (as Mr. Hodges complains) of "boosting" Hardy; on the contrary, the article is almost severely impartial, and gives a detailed account of Hardy's failure to cheer his readers. Moreover, I personally—though a fervid admirer of aspects of Hardy's work, his Wessex, for example, and his peasantry—hold no brief for his down-with-God attitude.

I have read Mr. Hodges' letter a dozen times, and still find it a mass of inconsequential and personal asides, wholly irrelevant and (to my mind) rather dry. Mr. Hodges makes the issue one of Christianity *versus* Scepticism—a squabble which ceased to engage my interest soon after I came down from Oxford.

It is apparent, therefore, that Mr. Hodges makes the grave error of judging aesthetic matters by ethical standards; that, in other words, he dislikes Hardy solely (or chiefly) because, to Hardy, such things as cancer, blindness, insanity, and world-war were incompatible with the doctrine of a Loving Shepherd. Mr. Hodges, in short, dislikes the works because the man was not a Christian. By the same standard (I presume) Mr. Hodges rejects Byron because of his women: Wilde because of his men: and Wordsworth because of his illegitimate child. As I see it, and without endorsing or rejecting the view, Hardy did no more than invite us to think that if any human shepherd treated his sheep as the Divine Shepherd treats His sheep, he would at once be removed to a home for pathological patients.

Mr. Hodges has every right to dislike anyone's writings; yet he should recall that some folks regard *The Dynasts* as a classic, and that on Hardy's 84th birthday a deputation of great European poets, led by our laureate himself, paid official homage to Hardy the poet. As one not wholly unconnected with a fight for liberty of opinion, I uphold Mr. Hodges' right to differ. I could wish, though, that he based his differences on something more relevant to art than are Christianity and optimism.

Finally, Mr. Hodges dismisses Hardy as "an absolute pessimist" . . . "not a poet" . . . "a failure" . . . one with no "vision of nobility." My answer to all this highly unacademic originality of opinion is Hardy's answer, and it comes from the close of *The Woodlanders*, in which a young girl whispers over the grave of her lover. To me, at least, the following passage has a vivid vision of nobility, and is true poetry—

" Whenever I get up I'll think of 'ee, and whenever I lie down I'll think of 'ee again. Whenever I plant the young larches I'll think that none can plant as you planted : and whenever I split a gad, and whenever I turn the cider wring, I'll say none could do it like you. If ever I forget your name let me forget home and heaven ! . . . But no, my love, I never can forget 'ee ; for you was a good man, and did good things."

E. M. Harrison (Middleton, Manchester) sends a similar protest, adding : " J. H. B. Peel surely must know that to the majority of English people the very name of Jesus of Nazareth is sacred. This paragraph is an insult. Surely the spirit of courtesy, and shall we say, " loving-kindness " (a phrase incidentally used so often by the Psalmist) should have prevented Mr. Peel from trampling underfoot those things his country people hold sacred. As for the rest of the article to me, he makes Hardy a defeatist of the worst type, and I have no use for this kind of poet. I prefer the Hardy who has come back from Lyonnesse with wonder in his eyes. Surely in these days we want the vision of the greatest things, things that will survive the gas-mask, graves and worms. If the poet has no message of hope, no lifting up the mind to beauty and to the eternal loveliness he has failed, for there is something greater and grander in life than even the poet dreamed and I hope J. H. B. Peel may find a truer vision of divine things."

I. Sutherland Groom (Sedbergh, Yorkshire), thinks the above-criticised sentence " deserves the slight effort in rhyme which I append " :

Thomas Hardy out-credits Christ, you say—
A great achievement this.
For one who on his pale misgiving way
Knew so little of bliss !

Dynasties pass, the D'Urbervilles depart,
But Hardy yet remains,
Although he wears deep in his cypressed heart
A dagger for his pains.

So Christ—and Newton (!) fade beside his verse,
Unanswerably sublime,—
Tess and the Mellstock villagers disperse
These Laughing Stocks of Time.

Then let us ignore the Shepherd of Gaillee,
And spurn his rod and staff,
Turn to Thomas Hardy and bow the knee
Before his photograph !

Easter Day, 1941.

### A Criticism of Mr. E. Curt Peters

What value can a protest have from a writer so unaware of the great importance of Mr. T. S. Eliot's work in the history of modern poetry and criticism that he considers it a ramp (*sic*), a conspiracy against the public? In the circumstances it may be suggested that Mr. Peters's own verse (p. 444 of the same issue) in no way supports this taste or "critical faculty," so commonplace is that verse alike in sentiment and expression, a cliché in almost every line.

He seems unable even to read Mr. Waller's interesting article. Here both poets are first regarded as social leaders warring against "the wrongness in modern life." It is not Mr. Waller's invention, but public opinion that recognizes the greatness of Dr. Marie Stopes's work.

When will the general run of would-be critics follow what Mr. Eliot, like his greatest predecessors, advocates, and write with "their eye on the object," examine the fact before them, the work, in its various aspects, instead of bringing with them to the bar of criticism their own inhibitions and prejudices, which, to paraphrase Coleridge's golden sentence excludes them from the heaven of true perception?

West Malvern, March 15th, 1941. Gwendolen Murphy.

May I, briefly, correct a misapprehension under which your correspondent, my very good friend Miss Edgelow, appears to be labouring in connection with certain recent remarks of mine concerning Eliot's "East Coker."

It is not Eliot's "influence" (in many respects salutary), but the mass-adulation that has poured parrot-wise from the mouths of a multitude of pseudo-intellectual Smart Alecks (as distinct from his relatively few genuine admirers) which I designed as a ramp.

I fail to see, further, why Mr. McCarthy's august name should be brought into this argument, just because he has expressed an opinion which differs from my own. I respect the opinion of so experienced a critic, to which he has every right, but reviewers are not obliged to see eye to eye over all the material they deal with: indeed, how dull it would be did they do so!

Coming to Mr. Rudston Brown's remarks on Miss Stopes, I am happy to think that he derives so much pleasure from her verse: but I cannot concede that the lines he quotes—hand-picked as they are—have the ring of an "overwhelming message," or that they in any way invalidate my contention that the greater part of "Oriri" is lush and derivative.

Since writing the above, I have received a proof of the letter, printed in this issue, signed Gwendolen Murphy. Mrs. Murphy, having shared Miss Edgelow's misapprehension as to what it was I labelled a ramp, lets herself be carried away by personal animosity.

In an attempt to demonstrate that I am no critic your correspondent loosely applies the words "commonplace" and "cliché" to a mythical

poem of my own (there is no page 444 in the issue she refers to). Leaving on one side the question of the merits or otherwise of my own verse (which I leave others, less "prejudiced," to judge!), since when must a critic be able to write as well as or better than his subject? History proves beyond a doubt that the finest critics are seldom outstanding creative artists.

The remainder of your correspondent's letter, in which I am accused of being inhibited and "unable to read" an article which I review, can only be regarded as a regrettable outburst of petulance, undeserving of serious comment.

B.B.C. Club, March 31st. E. CURT PETERS.

### THE CULTIVATION OF POETRY

THE POETRY REVIEW is, as far as I know, the only one of its kind devoted purely to poetry, at once the simplest and highest ability, the spirit of life. And I am sure that the continual enterprise of producing it to enlighten these "dark ages" is one of the greatest triumphs not only of national life, but of world-life, of which it is a leading part.

I must congratulate you on the March number, which I find very good, perhaps because it has a poem by Ruth Pitter, whom I consider one of our first poets (in fact, the best I know) and look out for.

I would attach more importance to the fostering of verse-production. Most people are, I find, in the habit of allowing their time and energy to be frittered away on routine work, or repetitive work, or social activities and so neglect their poetic ability.

Myself I believe poetry to be a high achievement—the mountain-top vision—and there are not many people who climb mountains. That is to say, I believe poetry to be a rare visitation, the result of, e.g.

(*a*) Much assimilated thought, life, study, experience—a sort of flowering or essential spirit of philosophy (like the edelweiss) or

(*b*) The product of sincerity—also rare and difficult.

And the few people who think deeply enough, and live sincerely and so are truly inspired *are* few and far between. Yet I believe most people as children have the simple sense of poetry, and I would like them to have more opportunity to make it.

I certainly also agree with you there is a great need for the recognition of poetry. The public is largely unaware of it, unlike music, which is popular, and even art, a little appreciated. The poet speaks to a few kindred spirits, but between them and the public is a vast gulf of ignorance, spanned only by the infrequent publishing of books of poems and your POETRY REVIEW, indeed a continual inspiration.

The Nature Cure Centre, Gouthland. ALICE M. KNIGHT.

"One of the most individual poets" (John Waller, in THE POETRY REVIEW, May 1940, said of Captain Alan Rook, R.A.) . . ." his poems have all the dream-like stateliness of the insubstantial mist that clings about the brain and the heart." (See p. 149.)

## THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

A good standard has again been maintained, although no particular poem has been outstanding. Our awards go to ELLODE COLLINS (Bournemouth), G. E. MERRICK (Warminster), GLADYS HUNKIN (St. Ives, Cornwall) and PHYLLIS LYTH (York), in each case for lyrics. Ellode Collins writes with her usual accomplishment and G. E. Merrick sends a fine sequence of sonnets "To the Sleeping Men."

Of those authors "Highly Commended" the following must be especially mentioned: IRENE CHAPMAN BENSON, DULCIE EDEN GREVILLE, I. SUTHERLAND GROOM, "LARIX," REDCLIFFE MCKIE, N. K. CRUICKSHANK, EDITH M. WALKER and CHARLES WOODHOUSE. Dulcie Eden Greville has written a striking reply to Miss Walker's poem which won our last award.

### HIGHLY COMMENDED.

Vere Arnot, Walton-on-Thames;
Irene Chapman Benson, Winni-peg;
M. D. Cameron, Kirkhall;
T. E. Casson, Ulverston;
E. B. W. Chappelow, Egham;
N. K. Cruickshank, Sudbury;
Eileen Dix, Buckfastleigh;
Evelyn M. Finn, Honiton;
Dulcie Eden Greville, Wakefield;
I. Sutherland Groom, Sedbergh;
Pauline Huthwaite, Grantham;
"Larix," Bristol;
Redcliffe McKie, Brighton;
Ida Mills, Ware;
Brenda Skene, Lustleigh;
Margery Smith, Linly, Notts;
Muriel Symmons, Salcombe;
Janet Urquhart, London, N.W.;
Edith M. Walker, Bournemouth;
Charles Woodhouse, Haslemere.

### COMMENDED.

Elizabeth Barrett, Thame;
N. MacGeagh Bond, Dungannon;
Alice E. Collinge, Harwood;
Nina Cumming, Hove;
Reginald C. Eva, Harrow;
Eleanor Margaret Hough, Bombay;
Marjorie S. Harbron, York;
J. W. G. Heaven, Ealing;
Peter Higham, London, W.;
Elizabeth Kentish, Westerham;
P. E. Leaver, Kelvedon;
Joyce M. Lloyd, Hassocks;
A. Lovell, Dover;
Ierne Ormsby, Thurgoland;
Cynthia Palmer, York;
Nancy Pollok, Rutherglen;
P. E. Procter, Taplow;
Dorothy Round, Dudley;
Joyce T. Rowe, Totteridge;
Harry Sefton, Lytham;
Roberta Shuttleworth, Guildford;
Arthur Lynnford Smith, Wanstead;
Patrick Stevenson, Portsmouth;
Bertha M. Skeat, Sedbergh;
Margaret E. Stringer, Tipperary;
Ruth Tenney, Streatley;
D. E. Christine Tomlin, Harrogate;
Phyllis Dulce Warwick, Newark.

The usual premium offer for the best poem or poems submitted to the Premium Editor during the month (without limitation of subject) is continued. Not more than four lyrics or one long poem should be submitted. MSS. should reach "The Premium Editor, THE POETRY

Review, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," by June 1st, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope, and if criticism is desired, 2s. 6d. (For a more detailed postal criticism, 5s. should be sent.) It is essential that entrants to this competition be members of The Poetry Society or registered subscribers to The Poetry Review, and that each poem bears the name and address of the author.

Wrenne Jarman describes The Poet's Tools:

The joiner needs his chisel,
The cobbler needs his last,
The smith needs his hammer
To drive the nails in fast:

The farmer needs his hayfork,
The potter needs his wheel,
The miller needs his windmill
To grind his keg of meal.

Envy the poor poet
Who makes his finest ware
With a little of his spirit
And words from out the air.

With a little of his spirit
And the words that crowding start,
He can write a tiny poem
To stir a nation's heart:

He can build a shrine to Beauty
Of the stuff that dreams are made . . .
O, the poet's are the cheapest
Tools of any trade!

Mr. Thomas Moult has awarded our contributor, Miss Pauline Huthwaite, of Barrowby Rectory, Grantham, the medal for an unpublished volume of verse offered by The British Annual of Literature Competitions.

G. Duncan Mitchell (Denmark Hill): May I congratulate you on the March issue of The Poetry Review; it is indeed a delight to read such a publication so full of distinctive poems and interesting articles when most periodicals are curtailing their editions. I sincerely hope that the good work goes on.

G. S. Oddy (Ryde): I am glad to notice a more provocative note in The Poetry Review of late. I congratulate all concerned upon the size and excellence of the current number March–April.

## AN ISLAND IN THE WAR

(from a longer poem)

NEVER was such a year for sun
At Ringshall as this sad one.
We seem sequestered on an island :
Bracken rolls for miles around,
The tips with silver sparkles shine,
And the green deeps close us in.
Though from that water come angry cries
Of soldiers at their practices,
Bobbing like boats in a rough sea
Above the fronds, in tank and lorry,
Of crouching camouflaged and slack,
Snails with their safety on their back ;
And though the planes rove through our skies
Constantly, moving like jealous eyes
Over our home, and serve to warn
Us to expect the locust soon ;
These, while they make our luck seem stranger,
Make us thank God, and bless this summer
Whose honey shall outlast war and winter.

Call it, then, an island in the midst of wars.
As those who sidled among the stars
Saw from their boat a fine ripe cheese—
The moon—and saw the burning tress
Of Berenice, Orion's bright
Blade, yet knew they were but light
Reflected, which they had seen below :
So in this sunshine forms I know
Take other shapes, as natural
And firm. I wonder whether to call
The coloured tide that laps the terrace
Where I work, water or flowers ;
Roses roll right to our doors,
Whorls of white foam ; snapdragon flares
Burn up in phosphorescent fires ;
Pink and purple sweet-pea spools
Are coloured drops in tropic pools.
Dark porpoise unseen leap

From leaves where wrens court and creep
Stripping the grubs ; when twilight comes
Our home a solitary lighthouse gleams,
And clumps of white daisies show
Where shoals of fish swim past the window.

Early, the air's thin silky blue
Only the finest sun lets through,
While through the wide-meshed air of evening
Leaks the light of his coarsest shining.
And early I walk behind the house
Where green in the ground our larder grows.
Circus flowers of the haricot bean,
White waxy potato blooms, and green
Marrow, hidden in a flannel tent,
And curved like a wind instrument—
All are pleasant for what they promise,
Unlike flowers, grown for the eyes
To please at once, for when the frore
Weather has beaten our ships from shore,
Or hostile guns have bit too deep,
These shall fend off the frozen sleep.

Even in the grass are things to eat—
Real or pretended : yellow and white
In spring were milky curds here
Of cowslip and cuckoo flower ;
Now eggs and bacon grow, and toad-flax,
Hereabouts called buttered haystacks.
Mushrooms fatten in a night,
The yaffle sucking up ants takes fright,
And flies to the little spinney, that
A glacier under bluebells lay,
Rich and warm now with rose bay.
There he hangs, his body pressed
To the trunk, like a sailor on a mast :
Only his coloured head betrays him,
Lolling back from the trunk which hides him.

* * *

This, then, is our summer country,
Wherein at times, remote and tiny,
I see my own familiar shape
Moving across a painted landscape.
But if the special character
Dividing forms can disappear,
Leaving the elements that they share;
And a common eye not only see
But cause this change, if it look rightly—
Jerusalem is not above all wars,
And wilder and more skilful eyes
Could see heaven in these places.

ANNE RIDLER.

## NEW FLOWERS OF DEVON

IN Devonshire the roses used to bloom
Down to the water's edge, and every field
And lane and garden spilled its sweet perfume
Upon the breeze, each month its special yield
Of fragrance of the sweet south.
But to-day
The gardens yield new blossoms—row on row
Of runner beans with blooms of scarlet spray,
Potatoes like a sea of mauve and snow.
"They're pretty things." So Devon writes; and goes
About its dedicated work with pride
And faith and quiet courage, though it knows
By day and night, above, death makes its ride.
And Devon's voice is England's. Lord, look down
And shield from harm each faithful little town!

Chicago. BEVERLEY GITHENS.

## EPITAPH FOR A GREEK SOLDIER

THE soldier, proudly and forever dead,
Lies in the dust he died for. Though he bled
Painfully here, complain not he is gone
Who went to find his friends of Marathon.

J.E.M.

## THIS FARMING IN ALTA

THIS farming in Alta's no cinch, you can bet you,
You've just got to do what the weather will let you.
A lot of hay down, and to stack it you're strainin'
When Old Sol disappears and it starts a-rainin'.
I'd a meadow in windrows of mighty fine hay
When up came a windstorm and blew it away.
In spring come the duststorms forever a blowin';
You can scarce see the horses or tell where you're sowin'.
And then it's so dry, and the dust devils dance;
Still the wheat beats the drouth if it's given a chance.
Or you'll get a good day on the binder, you guess,
But the dam' flying ants make you stop and undress.
And then after all, well, the crop has come through,
You can hardly believe it, but then it is true.
Of the stand and the heads you can hardly complain.
The threshers get set. It commences to rain.
The teams must be fed, and they mess up the fences,
Which you must endure till the work recommences,
Till you think that of all the vocations to choose,
This farming's the worst one to give you the blues.
Now the threshers are gone, and your troubles, like smoke,
And it's nice for a while to forget that you're broke.
There are obstacles many, too many to mention,
And to farm were a cinch, but for fate's intervention
Still farmers still stick it, in season, out season,
And one needn't look far to discover the reason,
For tho' but few dollars the farmer be worth,
At home on his farm he's the king of the earth.
And if the hard times make him grumble and mutter,
He stays with his job, for it's his bread and butter,
His green fields his garden. A suitable task for
Each day, and what more could any man ask for?
For when he desists from his cursing and swearing,
The farmer perceives just how well he is faring,
And if there's a mortgage which cannot be lifted,
The farmer sits tight and is not to be shifted.

Temple Grove, Alberta. J. P. SIMCOX (A Pioneer Settler).

## THE C.O. AND THE TRIBUNAL

THE Christadelphian smiles
His smile goes in and out
He knows many wiles
And logical right about.
Does making bomb
Hurt conscious aplomb ?
Apparently not
You snot
Thinks jowl-eyed referee
Referring to cups of tea
And cake on wood slabs.
The give and take
Of debate
Pleases Aristotle the Judge
Remembering Union days
And Sophocles
The Christadelphian
Gets exemption
With ease.
Aristotelian eyes
Penetrate lies
Of bitter controversialist
The split hair
And political flair
Rousing Bunyan
For personalities.
He that would fight
Would fight.
Reach deep down
For starved love
For back street brawls
And bitter fruit stalls.
This man has will
To kill.
Aristotle lengthens rope
Little by little
Gives scope
For cancellation
By tattle

Of Battle.
This man is dead
Killed by his face
To-night he will go to bed
With a grimace,
They have rubbed his name
From the register.
Between Aristotle and
The face of the people
Sits Mr. Worldly Wiseman
Hugging syllogisms
Pleased with cogency and fair questions.

But the face of the people
Is bitter with machine work
Long years of grease and labour
And early morning drizzle
The face of the people
Gouged with steel blades
And the eyes of the people
Are dull bolts.
And a slow furnace melts lead
Inside the people
Brimming in slow tides
Of heavy wrath at quick speech
And light-tongued commissionaires
Fattening on exotic rhythms.
Beloved what would happen
If the people took over
Sucked Aristotle into
Swamp level vistas
Denying chintz, concertos, and Greek vases
Blowing cigar smoke into poetic faces
Smashing the masters with heavy hammers
Leaving you and me
Obsolete identities and broken cogs.
What would this man do.
Confident in superior tonalities
Sympathetic touches

Whose faith is in quiet conversations
Reason on crutches ?
They would take his protective devices
In their fierce vices
And pound them into pokers
For slow fires
Into uninscribed mugs
Into steel hawsers
For running cages and pithead trolleys
Their logic is muscular
And visible parabolas
They would swing the sonneteers
With steel braces
Explode the valve of faces
And the soul's bright places
Gather the crops in their vast embraces
Returning from the hills in shouting buses.
They would give you a home
Without a dome
They would give you milk and rice
And honey but if you talked of paradise
They would grunt
And send you to shunt
Trucks into sidings.
O Christadelphian why are you smiling ?

*Trooper, R.A.C.* D. HORNE.

## SPRING 1941

NOW, since the Cuckoo was not late,
Nor did the Chestnut hesitate
To light her birthday candles all,
Cowslip set rubies in her hair
And May her party frock did wear—
Young debutante at summer's ball—
By these I know the rising sea
Of terror, hate and misery,
Ebbing at last from land to land
Will leave again the shining sand.

D. E. C. TOMLIN.

## THINK ON THE BRAVE

THINK on the brave when thick about
Your head the missiles fly ;
When mist obscures the sturdy flag
You used to reckon by ;
Think, then, on those who kept the faith,
Preferring certain death
To shameful compromise with hate,
Exhaling happy breath.
Turn, turn your eyes away from pain
To where, out of the dark,
The light of high endeavour still
Throws off its steady spark.
Remove your gaze from little men
Whose banners follow greed ;
Think on the valiant, strong or frail,
And pay them earnest heed ;
Reach out to them who, for the right,
Were suddenly made great ;
Strike hands with them and know yourself
Shaped quickly to your fate.
These were like you before the fight—
The many, not the few—
Think on these brave and know their Strength
Available for you.

Long Island. GRACE BUCHANAN SHERWOOD.

## TO-MORROW ?

THERE is no cause for sorrow :
The skies that weep to-day will smile to-morrow
And dry the tear-drops of the winter's rain.

The angry wind that blows
Will sleep, curled in the petals of a rose
Dreaming of summer's loveliness again.

There is no cause for sorrow :
The dawn's white rose will spread its leaves to-morrow
And hide the tear-drops of the winter's rain.

ROY MCFADDEN.

# THE LERMONTOV CENTENARY

MIKHAIL YURIEVICH LERMONTOV was born in 1814, two years after Robert Browning. He was killed in a duel on July 15th, 1841 (old style) after having lived a year longer than Keats.

The man who gave him life, an insignificant retired officer and low-grade squire, was almost certainly of Scottish descent. Learmonth or Liermont is one of the names given to the Scotch equivalent of Merlin. There are still Learmonts and Learmonths in Scotland's directories. A Scotch poet Learmont[1] flourished before the Russian poet Lermontov was born. The presumed Scottish ancestor of Lermontov was taken prisoner by the Russians in 1613 ; if this tradition is true Lermontov had hardly more than 1/64 or even 1/128 of Scots blood.

The man who took his life was also a retired officer ; he lived long enough to prove beyond doubt his personal insignificance. Apparently in the little spa of Piatigorsk (North Caucasus) where the duel took place Lermontov could not find a more gratifying target for his jokes and jests. They met almost daily and Lermontov would never tire of mocking and deriding Major Martinov, in Russian and in French, in the absence of ladies and in their presence. Not satisfied with words he drew biting cartoons of Martinov : he was quite a passable painter and cartoonist. Why ? Why this systematic persecution ? All witnesses agreed that there was no serious rivalry or quarrel, no possibility of misunderstanding, no reason for hate. Lermontov just teased his clumsy adversary as Byron teased his chained wolf in Newstead Abbey. But Lermontov's beast was less securely chained, and could take revenge.

Martinov was the last object of Lermontov's mockery. But he had many predecessors. In 1834 Lermontov confessed to a friend that his only amusement in society was to make love to a young girl, manoeuvre her into expecting an immediate proposal, and then abruptly change to rudeness and derision. In 1835 the game became even more elaborate.

[1] He was a gardener by profession, "laboured under the disadvantage of a stinted education," and published in Edinburgh in 1791 a volume of poems pastoral satirical, tragic, and comic (carefully corrected by the author).

Lermontov paid court to a girl. When his courting was sufficiently noticed by all her friends and relations he wrote her an anonymous letter warning her against her unscrupulous admirer (i.e. himself). He took care that the letter, although addressed to the girl, fell into the hands of her aunt. Her parents, alarmed, forbade her to talk or to dance with Lermontov. Lermontov feigned to be deeply insulted by this unexpected prohibition, but he left the girl alone—only, of course, so as not to endanger her reputation. The girl's name (Sushkova) became immortal; is it a sufficient reward for her sufferings?

At other times as well Lermontov was permanently mystifying somebody. Friends complained that it was never possible to guess whether what he said was in earnest or in jest. A French poet who met him in 1840 used less polite terms: "he lies incessantly and to everybody."

Teasing, hoaxing, lying—why did Lermontov indulge in these unattractive vices? Two reasons suggest themselves; or they may be two aspects of one reason.

The first one is the "lust of power." I hope the readers of THE POETRY REVIEW will not object to my quoting a prose novel of Lermontov's. Its hero says: "my foremost pleasure is to subdue to my will everything around me. . . To be, without any right to be, the cause of somebody's pains and joys—is not this the sweetest food for our pride? And what is happiness? Satisfied pride."

The other reason seems to be Lermontov's passion for psychological experiments. Novel writers, if they care for psychological probabilities at all, are constantly confronted with the question: how will Mr. X behave if that and that happens? Lermontov dealt with real, instead of imaginary, "Misters X" and registered their "reflexes."

It is logical that after assuming the attitude of a ruler of men or of an experimenter on men, Lermontov took the greatest care imaginable in order not to be ruled or experimented upon. The device he used was similar to that sometimes employed in medieval Russia. Then it happened that at the funeral service of a man whom all his friends and neighbours knew as, say, Fedor, the name, say, Mikhail

was used. The man was christened Mikhail but he always pretended to be Fedor in order to invalidate any charm his enemies might have pronounced against him. Let them invoke God's or the devil's might against Fedor; Mikhail rests in his security. In much the same way Lermontov pretended to be a young officer only interested in wine, women, cards, etc. Let people laugh at this personage, let them take advantage of his vices and impose on him their will; that was no concern of Lermontov and of his pride. Such is seemingly the explanation of Lermontov's lying incessantly and to everybody.

The continuous acting resulted of course in dreadful loneliness for the real Lermontov. There were external causes which could have promoted this loneliness: he was an only child and lost both his parents when he was two and a half years of age, his mother by death, and his father by desertion. But it is quite without doubt that his loneliness was essentially self-inflicted.

He had many opportunities to get friendly with men of the highest qualifications who would be able to understand and to converse with him on equal terms; he met Goncharov when he was 16, and Jukovski at 24. But his masquerading armour became the thicker the more penetrating was the gaze of the newcomer. What young poet would not clutch at the opportunity to impress favourably an influential and sympathetic critic? Lermontov met Belinski several times during the winter of 1838–1839. Belinski again and again attempted to start a serious conversation—Belinski was famous for discussions and not easily frightened by a cool reception—but Lermontov persistently replied with one kind of nonsense or another and succeeded in disgusting Belinski thoroughly. Only in 1840 when Lermontov was once more in a military prison for duelling did Belinski manage to break through Lermontov's armour. He returned charmed and full of admiration for the sublimity of the soul he discovered; but he also said he was sure that Lermontov bitterly regretted this denudation of his heart, however short.

A Spanish knight in Heine's *Bimini* prays to the Holy

Virgin, not to any Saint in Heaven, as the Saints are "males," and no male should pity him. Lermontov refused to bow even to women. For him the essential part of love was the domination of one soul over another; a whim of the beloved woman makes the lover the happiest of mortals, and another whim precipitates him into the abyss of despair. Lermontov was resolved never to be dominated and never to surrender the absolute control of his mood. So it happened that he never experienced a real passion, this exalted synthesis of the heavenly and the carnal love. He felt a "heavenly" love for a girl who, naturally enough, married another, but all his other loves were purely (or impurely) carnal.

The perpetual disguise which galled the life of the man Lermontov posed a grave problem for the working of the poet. A poet must be shameless: as a ballet dancer has to show her legs, he has to divulge his soul. How, then, to be a poet when one has an elemental, almost a convulsive fear of being seen through? At 16 Lermontov avoided the difficulty by keeping his poetry for himself, and later he surmounted it by assuming the attitude of an impassive narrator. Now all his manuscripts are accessible to our indiscretion and we can examine at leisure the real Lermontov of whom a glimpse once fascinated Belinski.

In 1830, when he was 15¼ to 16¼, Lermontov wrote over 150 short poems. Some of them give most interesting indications of the origin of Lermontov's disease. "I hated the whole world so as to love thee more." This truly exclusive love is supposed to be a valuable asset; when comparing his own accomplishments with those of a rival Lermontov asks: "Did he know how to despise the despicable world so as to have in mind thee alone?" As the rival did not know he was not qualified to love *her*. It is easy to imagine how this wild boy frightened the girls who would have liked him, saved him from loneliness, and, perhaps, calmed him. But there was one obstacle more. Even if nothing else poisons love it will be withered by age: think of the agony of seeing wrinkles mar the beloved face! It is better to live and to die alone than to have to

weep over *two* agings. That is, of course, the view of the Nirvana. Lermontov's extraordinary sensitivity discovered it independently before he was 16.

Since he was so easily hurt and so afraid of mental pain Lermontov asked his fellow-men : why do you hurt other people's feeling ? Why do you inflict useless pain ? When he was 16 these questions were mostly uttered as a complaint. When he matured—after 1837—they became invectives. He was ashamed of appearing tender but did not mind being seen in anger. He inveighed Society and the Court for not having saved Pushkin (who was killed in a duel in 1837), his generation for being impassive in face of good and evil, the town's beauties for having lost their freshness and chastity, etc., etc. But, as already mentioned above, in these latter years he preferred not to ask at all. He told in a most concentrated and impersonal form tales of cruelty and heartlessness. A tree in full bloom refuses hospitality to a withered leaf blown to its trunk by the wind. Arabs after enjoying the shade of three palms in the desert fell and burn them when the night gets cold. A prince pulls out of the sea a beautiful daughter of the Sea-King and lets her suffocate on the beach. The reader is just informed of what took place ; he may ask rhetorical questions if he wants to.

The last of Lermontov's serious poems was " The Prophet." A prophet attempted to preach " the pure tenets of the truth." He was stoned and had to flee to deserts and to live with birds. And when he had to pass hastily through a town old men pointed him out to youngsters as an example of justly punished conceit : he pretended to speak for God ; look at his poverty, at his infirmity, look how everybody despises him !

Presumably Lermontov was already teasing Martinov when he wrote that. It is a long way from pitiless mockery to the sacrifices of a prophetic mission. But such was the range of Lermontov's power, such was the distance between the visible Lermontov and his core.

In this short article I cannot tell what else was included within the boundary stretching from prophet to duellist. I had to confine myself to the features which were most

peculiarly Lermontov's. If a reader of THE POETRY REVIEW recognizes in him a kindred nature, or if he finds Lermontov's mind interesting from any other motive, he should read what Lermontov wrote in the language which Lermontov used. He will be generously rewarded both as a psychologist and as a poet.

J. J. BIKERMAN.

## TRANSITION

A WAVE breaks ; and twilight falls ;
And time ticks softly on the shelf.
Though shadows linger on the walls,
There's but one sigh that severs soul from self.

Inevitable, as the sun that scales the sky
To meet another long-appointed dawn,
Is the predestined moment ; or the sly
Second that tricks us into being born.

HOPE COOPER.

## ANOTHER WAR

PARIS and Helen, the first night they fled,
Slept in a forest cover in the hills ;
Paris and Helen, lying there unwed,
Became a legend for their loving wills.

Heart never climbed to anything like this,
Hands never felt such folding of the flesh,
Lips never savoured such tumultuous bliss,
Mind was not netted in so fine a mesh.

She was as beautiful as skies at dawn,
He had the archer's movements, lithe and swift,
They were the gentlest, lovingest pair born—
And yet to them God gave this bitter gift
To bring the Grecian mothers death and tears
And doom Troy to destruction in ten years.

Uganda. GEOFFREY MASEFIELD.

## HER NAME IS DEMOCRACY

FOR many years she was afraid—
Afraid of power,
And afraid of weakness—
Afraid of poverty,
And afraid of wealth—
Afraid of her friends,
And afraid of her enemies—
But, above all,
Afraid, terribly afraid,
Of *herself*.

She was too timid
To look Fear in the face
Or to measure his stature,
And dare neither
Acknowledge him in public
Nor challenge him in private—

So he hunted her
And haunted her
Unceasingly—
And his shadow,
Gaunt and lithe,
Lurked behind every door.

Passers-by wondered
Why her laugh was so loud
And its tone so empty—
Also why her wireless set
Was invariably turned on,
Though she seldom—very seldom—
Attempted to listen to it.

But *she knew*, too well,
She must never be really alone—
Alone with her thoughts—
Besides she dreaded the tiger strength
Behind that lurking shadow
That waited upon her solitude.

Before the war
Her house was called Peace—
But the windows were draughty,
The doors rattled,
The walls were damp,
And snow invariably found its way
Between the leads of the roof.

She was well aware
That recent excavation
Endorsed the fate—the relentless fate—
Of the walls of Jericho—
And she was equally well aware
That her house was " Jerry " built,
And, like them, might collapse
And fall suddenly flat.

But since the war
She has busily rebuilt it
On a solid foundation—
She has stripped off the stucco of illusion,
And exposed the lime—
The hidden, unslaked lime—
Of her evaded fears.

Its foundation is Courage,
Its bricks are Humanity,
Its mortar is Mercy,
Its windows are Truth,
Its doors are Freedom,
And its roof—Its high pointed roof—
Is the Eternal Spirit of Love.

There are no dark corners,
And no lurking shadows,
And, though it deliberately faces East—
Buffeted by the fiercest winds—
She knows it is impregnable
And imperishable,
For, looking towards Dawn
On the Eternal City,
It can never see the sun
Set on its splendour.

ROBERTA SHUTTLEWORTH.

# THE APPREHENSION OF POETRY AND YOUTH[1]

THERE are those who think poetry nothing but a fiddling about with things, a stringing together of needless words, instead of calling a spade a spade outright, and having done with it. There may be some here who feel thus. I salute their hard virtue and their single-mindedness. To value only facts or things, to be laconic on principle, to go by common sense and pooh-pooh imagination is a severe discipline. It is not easy to emulate such self-denial, or to reason with persons of this austerity. They wear a good defensive armour, and give no grip. I have nothing against this armour-plate for those who choose to live in it except this. They buy their safety dear. Their armour-plate robs them of freedom of movement, and freedom of speech, and freedom of thought. But I will leave the disparagers to enjoy their cautionary mood, and to set the safety catches against their own better nature, and will turn to poetry itself.

What is it? I confess that I cannot define it. Definitions are current, I know, for I can remember some from my youth,—"criticism of life," "emotion remembered in tranquillity." But I am not sure about "emotion." When I am tranquil, I remember not emotions but things, people, events, actions. Emotions cling to some of them: and sometimes the emotion seems to be of their essence, and to add fragrance or completeness or uniqueness. If comfort and quiet help some to write reminiscent poetry, it is an accident of the making of poetry. Poets differ. Robert Burns' "Tam o' Shanter" reads as if made in a storm, one of those Homeric storms in which all the winds blow from all quarters simultaneously—winds of laughter, and wild ironic humour, and mad-cap fun, and savage frolic, and fiasco. There is no tranquillity here, but a storm of creative genius—a veritable brain-storm.

I cannot define poetry. Let me try, therefore, to describe

[1] From the Annual Poetry Lecture at St. Olave's Grammar School, S.E. (now at Torquay), founded by Mr. C. Oscar Gridley, one of the Governors. This 1940 lecture was given in December last by Dr. John Murray, Principal of the University College of the South West, Exeter.

it. It is natural to mankind since it can be seen setting in strongly about the age of nine. It is natural, but not ordinary or average. Its quick motion stirs up all the power of the mind into one vivid energy. Its rôle is to create, or to recreate. Its root is spontaneity, an exuberant versatile spontaneity that has an instinct of shaping and harmony to guide it. Its key is joyous, or not without joy, or not without something that struggles to be joy or to fill the place of joy. In manner it is a rhythmic melodious outburst: it says what it sees, and says it in a singing way. Its limitless themes are all things in heaven and earth and man, save those that cross its singing mood—the ugly, the base, and the false. Its ambition is nothing less than the conquest of the world and of life for the spirit of man: and the fruits of this selfless happy warfare are no man's property and all men's delight.

That is saying much. Could it be summed up briefer? Poetry is a conquest, won by response. Poetry is a transporter, as Emerson said: the poet and his hearers are got out of themselves, and made one with the theme, and incidentally are made one with each other, as William Watson observed of the poet: "He binds the scattered ages with a song." The voice of poetry modulates in all keys, measures, cadences, and diction. Its selective mood still leaves it the widest choice of theme, from infinity to nothingness, and all between. Some themes are so slight, so fugitive as hardly to be nameable, such as Robert Frost's—

> The way a crow
> Shook down on me
> The dust of snow
> From a hemlock tree
> Has given my heart
> A change of mood
> And saved some part
> Of a day I had rued.

For negation take one of the many fine poems on "Sleep," or rather on insomnia, such as Drummond of Hawthornden's,

> Sleep, silence child, sweet father of soft rest,
> Prince whose approach peace to all mortals brings,

> Indifferent host to shepherds and to kings,
> Sole comforter of minds with grief oppressed;
> Lo! by thy charming rod all breathing things
> Lie slumbering with forgetfulness possess't,
> And yet o'er me to spread thy drowsy wings
> Thou spares, alas! who cannot be thy guest.
> Since I am thine, O come, but with that face
> To inward light which thou art wont to show,
> With feigned solace ease a true-felt woe;
> Or if, deaf god, thou do deny that grace,
> Come as thou wilt, and what thou wilt bequeath,
> I long to kiss the image of my death.

To give negations even the semblance of substance is a miracle, but only a little more miraculous than the elusive economy whereby poetry finds its occasions in whatsoever themes. There is a sense, I think, in which all themes, however complex or imposing, are but the occasions of poetry. Poetry needs and seeks its occasions: it is in mankind, and it must out. Between infinity and nothingness is the immeasurable range of things existing and imaginable. On these poetry seizes, heady and intent, without leave asked of critics, censors or tradition. Poetry, a young radical, makes straight for the goal.

The summing up of poetry in brief, I fear, is a very long matter. Let me try instead to fix its genesis. What are its first authentic speech and motion? The poet's line "I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came," is fine but not informative. What did those lispings mean? No one, of course, can tell for sure. But one guess is as good as another, and I guess "Eureka." Those lispings sounded the joys of discovery. The age of discovery, to be sure, is youth. The old may be known from the young by this, that the cry and the joy of discovery have died out in them. Youth, therefore, is poetry, and poetry is youth.

Can this be proved? I think it can, though I doubt the need of proof. Who keep their youth best throughout life, the youth of the spirit, I mean? Those who continue to love poetry, whether they write it or not, and not merely their old favourites but new poetry of strange and challenging quality, as it may easily be. The essence of youth lasts,

I think, as long as mind and imagination can stretch to take in and enjoy the fresh creations of some new astounding poet.

Proof even clearer can be had in any school. The taste for poetry, the making of it included, is endemic in children. With the least encouragement they write it, and write it well: and very few of the things they do in school bring them more pleasure or more profit. Much of this poetry has been in the Eureka! spirit. Some has been the poetry of pure observation. To open the eyes expectantly on whatever is there, to note it down joyfully with some selectiveness, with something of pattern and rhythm though less perhaps of metre, in a happy fit of seeing and telling—all that makes good the poetic claim. A rapid welcoming survey of a thing, or of many things, in a glorifying mood is primitive poetry, but poetry. But many pupils rise above this primitive plane. I quote from an anthology of work which is accumulating upon me.

THE SAHARA (Girl, 12):

No wind, no breeze,
No breath of air,
No leaves, no trees,
So gaunt and bare,
Just waves of sand,
Make up this land
Unconquered, the Sahara.

THE AEROPLANE (Girl, 11):

The Aeroplane when up on high,
Is just a speck within the sky.

When lower down her wings do shine,
She looks just like a bird divine.

But nearer still I shake with fear,
I really wish I was not here!

MEMORY (Girl, 18):

One long sweet summer more, and we'll have done
With School. I wonder, shall we long recall
The cool, wide-windowed rooms, the curtained hall,
The leafy garden, where we used to run

To games, bare-legged and cheerful, or the fun
Of summer days, on sun-warmed grass asprawl,
To work, or, idling hear the thirsty call
Of rooks, elm-hidden, through a daze of sun.
But after, in the world of workaday,
Whether we numbered are among the few
Who reach the top, or in the labour queue,
Or, with a shabby pittance, drudge away
A drab existence, we'll remember less
Our schoolday triumphs, than their happiness.

TWILIGHT (boy 12):

The twilight softly, gently, falls at last
In town and city gleaming lights flash out,
From rush and bustle of the day fly fast,
And seek the quiet of a country lane.

Between the scented hedgerows slowly walk,
And smell the balmy air with scent of grass
Of leaf, and creeper with long twining stalk
Of pretty flowers nestling 'neath the banks.

The darkness falls, reluctant home you stroll,
To carry memories of that twilight hour,
You think of twisted oaks, of rabbit hole,
The house is reached, you enter, close the door.

MEMORY (Boy 17):

A solemn church bell throbs the twilight hour,
And slow amid the ivy stifled tower,
The thrumming lingers, dies. The wooing dove
Has stilled its crooning coo of soothing love.
All is silence; it is the hour of peace,
We see with wonder woolwhite clouds that fleece
The sunset glories, blood bright fires that blaze
With golden hues untrodden angel-ways,
Far, far beyond. The colour pageant fades,
And willows throw grotesque fantastic shades
On moonlit turf. The cornfield stirs in sleep
Beneath the stars a hallowed silence deep.

These poems prove, surely, the naturalness and the joy of writing poetry from the earliest years. They also prompt a question. What of those who have grown old without ever writing a poem? I answer by another question. What about poems if no one read or listened to them? All

literature is a double affair. One man speaks and the rest listen. Let poetry be ever so good, it would fall flat if there were no hearers with the eye to see and hearts to feel. Fall flat! Why, it would never be written. Poets, orators, musicians, actors, preachers are only half the story. The audience is the other half: and it may sometimes be the better half. Poetry is an opening of eyes. It is a lesson in looking and in learning what to look for. Without such lessons the casual eye of mankind is apt to miss many things. Poetry is seeing and showing. Some who see cannot show: and some try to show who see poorly. Some, and let us thank Heaven for them, can see and show and tell forth. For those who see the poetry in the world and in life, and who live much in the atmosphere of poetry, but cannot express it, the poetry in them is still a possession and a power.

But I have been digressing. Let me return to the "Eureka!" clue and the poetry of observation. For poetry comprises both the Olympians and the lesser folk, and among the latter the journalists and reporters of the craft. Nearly a century ago in a new country, where life was expanding and diversifying rapidly, there appeared the pioneer of this journalism, a pealing commanding voice of authentic youth—Walt Whitman of America. He has the full freedom of the press, to report the universe. He is like God: he not only reports the universe, he tells you that it is very good. I quote passages that illustrate his outlook:

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deck-hand singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,

The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows,
robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

* * *

What do you see, Walt Whitman ?
Who are they you salute, and that one after another salute you ?

I see a great round wonder rolling through space,
I see diminute farms, hamlets, ruins, graveyards, jails, factories,
palaces, hovels, huts of barbarians, tents of nomads upon the
surface,
I see the shaded part on one side where the sleepers are sleeping, and
the sunlit part on the other side,
I see the curious rapid change of the light and shade,
I see distant lands, as real and near to the inhabitants of them as my
land is to me.

Not Columbus but Whitman is the true discoverer of America : he makes the reader see it and surrender to it. Inspired and taught by him America is still discovering herself. This every-little-bit-of-it poetry, this every-single-one-of-you poetry, this all-embracing welcome is elemental democracy. To the new American poets who derive from Whitman few themes come amiss. Life goes fast in America. It flashes past, variegated multitudinous and loud, and the reporter poets chase after it, anxious to catch each detail and flicker, and working, as reporters must work, against time.

Toward you all, in America's name,
I raise high the perpendicular hand, I make the signal,
To remain after me in sight forever,
For all the haunts and homes of men.

Carl Sandburg's recent book *The People, Yes* is a poetical study of that great Leviathan, the American democracy : a book without its like. It is better to ponder than to quote from. I offer an echo from this sounding medley.

The people is a monolith,
a mover, a dirt farmer,
a desperate hoper.
The prize liar comes saying, " I know how, listen to me and I'll bring
you through."
The guesser comes saying, " The way is long and hard and maybe
what I offer will work out."

The people choose and the people's choice more often than not is one more washout.
Yet the strong man, the priceless one who wants nothing for himself and has his roots among his people,
Come often enough for the people to know him and to win through into gains beyond later losing,
Comes often enough so the people can look back and say,
"We have come far and will go further yet."
The people is a trunk of patience, a monolith.

In these echoes you will not find classic style or beauty. Others of Sandburg's poems clash still more sharply with the traditional standards, his "Chicago" for instance, which begins:

"Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nations Freight Handler;
Stormy husky brawling,
City of the big shoulders:
They tell me you are wicked and I believe them" . . .

Many readers making their first acquaintance with Sandburg and other Americans find in them neither beauty nor concern for it. Are the Americans wrong? Or are these readers wrong in requiring beauty of the poets? I shrink from putting Beauty on trial. But were she once brought to court, I can easily imagine a speech for the prosecution.

"Now all this about beauty is humbug. Where did it all come from? From Greece. The ancient Greeks made a lot of it. They made it because they liked it. They needed it. I can't say anything about their poems: I can't read them. But I can look at their statues. They're beautiful. They're different from everything else I've ever seen or heard tell of. But what's nothing to do with us. We're after something quite different. All this about beauty just keeps our poets fiddling about with a lot of silly refinements. Some of our poets are always aping the Greeks, and what do they get for it? I'll tell you. They write a lot of subtle stuff, polished like a piano, and full of fine words that have been keeping the best company for hundreds of years, and as smooth and slick as can be. And a lot of it is so full of deep meanings that you can't find out what it means at all. A lot more poets are all taken up with themselves, suck out a power of queer stuff right out of their own innards. It's not decent. But that's nothing to do with the Greeks. By all I've heard they kept the

stopper on all that. They looked all round about them for something to write about, and found plenty, and of course by the time they'd turned it out it was beautiful. But we're different. I'll tell you poets what I think about beauty. Leave it alone. Never think about it. Try for something else, and maybe you'll get that, and maybe you'll get a little whiff of beauty as well now and then. Beauty is something that just happens. You can't arrange for it. A small ration now and then is quite enough. If it was beauty beauty everywhere, we'd be sick of it. We aren't too good at beauty. I don't say go for what's ugly or common or dull. But write a poem with some body and substance in it, and make it run, and make it cheery if you can, and if it has to be solemn or deep or painful, be sure it does us some good by the time we've got to the end of it. Write about something you really like, and if you like it enough, we'll probably like it too. Put a lot of body into what you write, and write it as well as you can, without being finicky. We're not Greeks. They had a lot of taste and refinement, but we've got a good hearty appetite for the main thing. What that is—well, I've told you, and if you haven't picked it up, you never will."

I can easily imagine the court being disorganized by this speech: chuckles, and applause in the gallery, perturbation among the Counsel for the defence, and mixed feelings on the Bench. The Judge, having learnt Greek, would have been distressed, as well as amused. He would have broken the rules and plunged at once into a speech:

"I owe it to myself and to all here to meet the charges against Beauty and the Greeks.

"Poetry is natural to mankind, and the finest poetry is the measure of man's nature, and the measure of the finest poetry is beauty, and in beauty the Greeks are the master-teachers of all of us.

"They are our teachers above all in humanity. Through poetry one man speaks for all and to all, and all come at one. No speech is more public, since it reaches all ears, or more private, since it moves all hearts. Poetry befriends man with man, and the best poetry befriends the best men in the best ways.

"It is not enough for poets to seek after beauty. Those who aim closest at it commonly miss it. Those who aim at other great and fine and noble things sometimes find it. Those who love these things best find it oftenest. Beauty is won by faith; and the highest beauty is bought with strong faith and great love."

JOHN MURRAY.

# LETTERS FROM PAUL

[Note : This poem is a slightly coloured, dramatized version of real letters written by a young French would-be aviator. All of the place names are true and many of the phrases are translated directly from the French.]

*Montaigut, August*, 1939

Ma chère, this holiday I write
from Montaigut, the ancient site
of a volcano. Here all day
I break the earth or sometimes stay
to guard the pasturing sheep. (You know
my uncle owns a farm.) I go,
work done, to stretch within the long
cool silence of the evening. Strong
breaths of quiet the mountain breathes—
the tired sun sleeping on the leaves,
the thoughts that drift in sunshot streams,
vague reveries, fantastic dreams.
I ponder, strangely still and sad
on power in a world gone mad ;
Hitler ! how dangerously he grows.
We neighbours yet may come to blows.

Enough of that ! We had a feast
the other day. I ate at least
a hundred mushrooms and some fish
I caught myself. Always I wish
that I could stay in Montaigut—
Such peaceful hours are now so few.

*Paris, March*, 1940

Ma chère petite amie, at last
great news : my civil life is past.
I join the army of the air
in the Gironde—that is where
they make the wine. I leave to-night.
Cooped in my cluttered room I write
in feverish haste to reach Cazaux,
the South, the warm.

But do you know
last night I crossed the river Seine
in darkness to the Madeleine—
Paris, the capital of light,
the luminous that scorned the night.
Pouf! the night fell down and quenched
that careless glow. My home, it wrenched
my heart to walk your streets and see
those streets grown dim as memory.
Paris, I kiss my hand to you.
I leave to-night! To-night a new
life rises as the old life dies.
I see this France with soldier's eyes.

*Cazaux, March*, 1940

Ma chère amie, I saw so much
of lovely France. Now I give such
to you that it shall not be lost.
The sun was rising as I crossed
the Mèdoc glowing with the grape;
the Gironde with huge mouth agape
and growing on its banks Bordeaux
where British ships now come and go;
a lake enfringed with bleeding pines;
low hills; the sun's soft amber shines;
here kinder, gentler people grow.
Then at length we reached Cazaux.

They told us all this afternoon
that we begin our training soon.
This is my France; this is her might.
God, I am eager now to fight—
She needs a gun to guard her plough.
Her grain, her vines, her people now
will smash the Nazis blow on blow
until the battered Germans show
submission to democracy.
We are great soldiers. They shall see.

*Brouilla, July*, 1940

Ma chère petite amie, we are
detached for now at Broilla.
Each day we swim the river Tech
whose currents churn to foam and fleck
the rocks then drop into the sea
at cap Cèrbere. Gold alchemy
of sun has burned us brown and strong
as every day we dream the long
hours out—there's nothing else to do.
Just now I happened to glance through
my window and I saw the rim
of mountains glitter in the dim
starlight. Across these hills lies Spain.

How sharply etched upon my brain—
impassionate snow, the Pyrenees.
How new, how great, this unscaled peace.

Beneath the shining groynes of Spain
we wait for civil life again
to know what we are now become.
We fish and bathe and dream of home.
I feel so tired ; it must be late.
I'll write again, but now . . . I wait.

Vancouver, B.C. DOROTHY TRAIL.

## JUNE 1937

FROM the green heart of a Tree
A rodless Singing . . .
At once all has been said
Of Love and Living.

From the dark heart of the Nations
Fair words flying . . .
And nothing being said
Of Hate : of Dying.

FRANKLIN PARKER.

## RESURGENCE

ALWAYS at dawn the work begins again
Using the fallen bricks of yesterday.
Shadows and light on new foundations play.
Stout structures rise above the ruined plain
To challenge time, defy the hurricane,
Faith builds for those who down this road will stray
Visions will here be born and griefs give way
As life repeats her rhythm and refrain.

We search the ruins when our mansions fall
For treasure lost beneath the shattered dome.
The lightning strikes the man, the tree, the wall
Yet will persist the garden and the home;
Something remains that will endure through all
Falls in the dust, or haunts the catacomb.

Rochester, New York. MARGARET MCGORMAN BERRY

## CLEARWELL

IT'S sleeping time in Clearwell;
After a day of rain
In the green night of summer
The stars are out again.

In the Meand of Clearwell
The broken houses lie;
The weary men are sleeping
Their dogs and children nigh.

On the Meand of Clearwell
The hills are folded in;
They bear the whitened cherry trees
When the spring winds begin.

NANCY DICKINSON.

## NOCTURNE, 1941

GOODBYE, my dear—we may not say Goodnight;
The golden moon is rising over there;
Already throbs the tense expectant air—
We know that Death rides down the silver light.

Now wails the warning, and again the shrill,
Whistles are piping in the shadowed streets ;
Then quiet, and the silent city waits—
Even the Watchers of the Night are still.

It may be both of us will see the sun
Rising red-lidded in a smoking sky ;
Or it may be that one of us will lie
Too still to notice that the night is done.
But come, for duty calls—the moon swings high ;
Goodnight it may not be,—my dear, goodbye.

J. C. Lyth.

## THE TIDES OF SPRING

TURN back the emerald tides of Spring, dear God,
Laden with tender argosies of dreams ;
I would forget the woodland ways we trod,
When April stirs the hemlock-haunted streams.
O hold within the silent thrall of frost
The shrouded rose, foredoomed to rise again,—
Binding my heart to youth's enchantment lost,
Awakening olden ecstasy and pain.

Yes, halt the immemorial tides of Spring,
And in some sombre citadel apart,
Restrain the ardour of the urgent wing
For one last hour. That pulsing moment thwart
When memory's relentless hand will fling
Her timeless lash across my lonely heart.

Winnipeg. Irene Chapman Benson.

## COMPENSATION

TREES by lightning riven
Dread no hurricane ;
One whom fire has shriven
Feels not wind or rain,
Fears no threat of pain ;
Calm the bolt has given,
Balm along with bane. Eleanor M. Hough.

# W. H. AUDEN AND HIS *NEW YEAR LETTER*

IT is impossible to give full reasons for the extraordinary reputation of Mr. W. H. Auden save by tapping springs which would require a whole issue of THE POETRY REVIEW. We know that he is in no way a best seller, and has never achieved one quarter of the popularity enjoyed by Masefield, or Humbert Wolfe, or Bridges of the *Testament of Beauty*, and yet he is well on the mat. He has been rejected by all the older generation, by three quarters of the middle generation, and by at least four-fifths of the new (the rising verse-reading "bloods," the young eager people up to twenty-five years of age). The only generation (if you may call it that) which swallows him (or pretends to swallow him) is one between the middle and the very young, the ages of his admirers extending roughly from about twenty-five to thirty-five; but even these people are by no means unanimous. Much of his verse is obscure, tortuous, muddled, pretentious, and often amazingly nonsensical. Only in sudden flashes is he really good, but such goodness is surprisingly rare, and nearly always reminiscent of some other poet. Even his ballad verses are not really ballad, for he seems to have no understanding of "sprung-rhythm" as it governed the Border ballad, the pure ballad. If he strikes the ballad note at all it is that of the broadsheet or street ballad, the ballad in its decadence and decline. And when he seems to be on the way to real achievement and starts a poem well or arrestingly, he invariably breaks down, as, for instance, in the second stanza of the lyric beginning "Fish in the unruffled lakes," where he changes from a musical, flexible rhythm to one that is flat and prosaic. Lucidity with Mr. Auden is too often flat doggerel, energy a riot of snarls or grunts and snorts, and melody mere nonsense.

He began his poetical career as one of "The Three Blind Mice," and belongs to a clique which I define as that of the Faberians or Eliotites. As cliques are often very powerful for a time, and vociferous minorities in these decadent muddle-headed days have a way of putting sanity in chains

(though only, it is believed, for a time) I suppose that is a sort of explanation for some of his reputation.

My first fairly definite acquaintance with his work was through an anthology; and a contribution pretentiously (or raggingly) entitled "Poem" opened with this priceless pearl of Dadaism:

> For what as easy
> For what though small
> For what is well
> Because between
> To you simply
> From me I mean

A short time afterwards I came across a weekly review in which I read that the stanza was remarkable for its good technique; but the admirer evidently knew nothing whatever about technique, or was wilfully dishonest in his praise. Since then I have tried to read Mr. Auden's books, and even tried to approve of that much admired and applauded lyric which begins:

> O Love, the interest itself in thoughtless Heaven,
> Make simpler daily the beating of man's heart; within,
> There in the ring where name and image meet,
> Inspire them with such a longing as will make his thought
> Alive like patterns a murmuration of starlings
> Rising in joy over wolds unwittingly weave.

But every attempt to emulate Bruce and the Spider has dismally failed, and completely against my will I have been forced to come to unpleasant conclusions punctuated by various question marks. What is the point of all this? Was Mr. Auden trying to adopt the art and peculiar communication of the French symbolists? For if so he has not in the least succeeded. The poem (especially in its opening) is laughter provoking, and is as defective in logic and grammar as it is in imaginative common sense, sounding uncommonly like a parody of all the moderns, Eliot included. But occasional lines of his stick fast in the head, especially when they are satirical, as in the curiously unpatriotic "Birthday Ode," where he trots out things like this:

> England our cow
> Once was a lady—is she now?

There is in the same effusion a good deal of muddy venom about John Bull; and perhaps Mr. Auden differentiates, and thinks of John Bull as British, and "England our Cow" as English or Saxon. At any rate he recently felt so little confidence in either sex that he fled to the United States of America, and I imagine that his ponderous new book *New Year Letter* (Faber and Faber, 10s. 6d.), is not only intended as a complex plea for the institution of a "New Order" (there is an uncommon Nazi smell about some of these stick-together, cathedral-smashing modernists), but is also as a sort of involved poetical justification and explanation of his act. Little in it is very clear, and his occasional lucid or arresting moments rarely throw more light on the matter than this does:

> Twelve months ago in Brussels I
> Heard the same wishful-thinking sigh
> As round me, trembling on their beds
> Or taut with apprehensive dreads,
> The sleepless guests of Europe lay,
> Wishing the centuries away;
> And the low mutter of their vows
> Went echoing through her haunted house,
> As on the verge of happening
> There crouched the presence of the Thing.

Or than this:

> Eccentric, wrinkled and ice-capped,
> Swarming with parasites and wrapped
> In a peculiar atmosphere,
> Earth wobbles on down her career
> With no ambition in her heart;
> Her loose land-masses drift apart,
> Her zone of shade and silence crawls
> Steadily westward. Daylight falls
> On Europe's frozen soldiery
> And millions brave enough to die.

But why is America so exempt? Or has he confused America with one of the stars, and severed it completely from Earth? And what does he mean by "Her zone of shade and silence crawls steadily westward?" And what is really the central theme and argument of this letter of fifty-eight pages? And why do fifty-eight pages of verse

require as many as eighty-one pages of notes? And why are the notes sometimes so obscure, and even more obscure than the verse? And why does he quote from over half a hundred different literary celebrities, from Dante and Donne to Nietzsche and Rilke, to elucidate what he ought to have explained himself or the verse ought to have explained? And why are his own notes often written in rough doggerel instead of in prose? But these are questions which only the backside of the Moon can answer.

I have rarely been so brow-beaten by a single book. For a long time I wondered if I was fitfully insensitive and thick-headed or Mr. Auden was partially insane. It is obviously cloaked with camouflage, but whether such camouflage is deliberate or the unconscious effect of a blind Muse is not at all clear. What, however, is clear, is that Mr. Auden cannot or will not write clearly or explain clearly (at any rate, not for any length of time). Satire in conventional metre at least demands consistent and consecutive clarity of diction, or else it fails completely as satire, as condemnation of external event and social attitude, and becomes, instead, satire of its author's own mind and speech. In this book (as, however, is customary with him) logic and grace and respect for the reader are all too frequently flung blindly to the four swallowing winds. Long cumbersome verbose sentences, disconnections of symbols and terms, disconnections of idea, batter and bruise the inquiring brain, and advance with horrid tanks and planes to crush any attempt to get to good grips with the thing as a whole. His fitful flashes of penetrating wisdom and learning (and even of real poetry) are obliterated by the surrounding or ensuing smoke and scurry, in the same way as the balanced brains and genial hearts of a slaughtering totalitarian army are made of no avail by mass actions and military haste and environment. And why does Mr. Auden cram his book with tags of French and German (to say nothing of Latin) and passages of French and German? Some of us who have lived long years in France and Germany and were condemned to speak and read their languages whether we wanted or not, find such brandish-

ings of knowledge childish and pretentious. The reader who knows little or nothing will think " How learned ! " But the reader who stands upon any solid platform of culture will turn away in irritation or disgust.

I have thought many unprintable and half-printable things of Mr. Auden, one of them being that his extraordinary muddle is perhaps due to some curious feminine defect in the reasoning department of his brain. It is not merely that he seems to have no imaginative logical sense—and what imagination can work powerfully without logical sense ?—but he has a very insufficient everyday logical sense. He seems to have no knowledge whatever of the scientific laws of reasoning, of the syllogism, of the right selection of major and minor premiss and arrival at a true conclusion. For instance :

> O Freedom still is far from Rome ;
> For Moscow is as far as Rome
> Or Paris.

Now what does that mean ? Even symbolism should not be so crucified. While as to his " definitions," of which he gives a long list in his notes, most of them are not " definitions " at all, but " descriptions," or even comments.

And what among scores of queer couplets does this mean ?

> Yet time can moderate his tone
> When talking to a man alone.

I think indeed, I know what it means ; but I have the uncomfortable feeling that Mr. Auden intended something else, for realizing that it was a trifle odd he proceeded to write explanatory or corollary notes :

> In his Diary, Maxim Gorki tells how he came one day unobserved upon Tolstoi, who was attentively regarding a lizard sunning itself on a stone. " Are you happy? " Tolstoi asked the lizard. Then, after looking round to make sure no-one was watching, he said confidentially, " I'm not."
>
> *Dispatch from Buenos Aires, Sept. 19th,* 1939.
>
> " The German team won the world chess championship last night, beating the Polish team by one half-point."
>
> On the other hand, the private incident may seem all too symbolic. M. tells me that on the day war was declared her Scotch terrier began playing with her neighbour's small kitten and played so roughly that he broke its skull.

How, in the world, I would ask, do these four passages hang together? And what has an everyday incident of animal brutality got to do with the chess championship or the German-Polish war? Is Mr. Auden pulling the legs of his admirers, or is it just an instance of downright craziness, or constitutional incapacity?

But the "Letter" and notes do not comprise the whole of the book. There is a long prologue, a long epilogue, and many additional queer sonnets. Most of the criticism of the letter can apply also to these, though the "prologue" and "epilogue" are by comparison modernist in their technique—which amounts to saying that they have no seizable technique at all, or the technique is continually breaking down, resulting in an acute prosiness of diction which hardly applies to the metrically sound letter and sonnets:

> Returning each morning from a timeless world
> The senses open upon a world of time:
> After so many years the light is
> Novel still and immensely ambitious.
> But translated from her own informal world
> The ego is bewildered and does not want
> A shining novelty this morning
> And does not like the noise or the people.

Those are the first two stanzas of the Epilogue, and they perhaps express Mr. Auden's uneasiness. The book he feels is a "shining novelty," but readers will be "bewildered". Or is he writing about his own ego? The "informal world" smacks rather too much of a red-herring. But in the third stanza he speaks of "shadows with enormous grudges"—perhaps the wronged and cheated poets and critics of a traditional and more disciplined generation, who are standing "behind the doors of this ambitious day."

But Freud or no Freud (and saturation by Freud is manifest in much of the verse) when will Mr. Auden realize that "genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains," or at any rate as regards its expression in Art? This book of his has been written in too short a time and is often incredibly dull and showy, its few good passages revealing what its author might have arrived at if he had taken more pains and expended more time.

HERBERT PALMER.

## STREET IN THE OLD CITY

DOWN the street are faces drifting as a dream,
This has no ending, these are ageless things
That dreamed an hour or a thousand years
To find or nearly find the Flowing Now.
There is no end; black flesh and brown and white
Rots and is quick again; and down the street
The fruit, black brown and white, smiles in the sun.
Women black-clothed and faceless, blankly veiled,
Go by; this is their home, and this is home
For those fantastic towered priestly hats,
And faces blue-tattooed, and faces scarred;
Franciscan monks, and golden crowns of kings,
The easy walk of women, and the splash
Of sun on lousy robes like coloured flames
That light the street along: this is the home
Of smells sun-ripened, smells of baking loaves,
Of coffee roasting, fruit and human flesh,
Of dung and sweat and spice and cedarwood,
And oils and frankincense.

This stone-set town—
Of crowds and donkeys, narrow darkened ways,
And domes and courts and alleys—breathes and bursts
Of weltered heaped-up life along the walls,
The little shops that house a hundred trades—
Like books upon a shelf—their corners keep
The swept-up clippings of a shoe, a robe
Made yesterday for Christ.

There that old man
Vends coloured wax for candles, in whose shape
Were candles made a thousand years ago.
That shop has water vessels, newly-cast
In the proud-breasted shape that yet was known
To Saracen and Jew and Templar knight,
Down the short bitter years of yesterday.
Across the way are olives, shiny black,
Cheeses of goatmilk and small jars of spice.
And further on, the silversmith who placed

The heavy silver on those pink-black hands
That hold a fowl for sale ; and next to him
Damascene silks make of a dingy shop
A colourful cave of splendours.

In that court
Stands dreaming in the sun an ancient inn,
Whose like in Bethlehem last night refused
The unborn Christ ; they had not any room . . .
Down the street there is no ending : yesterday
Is nothing old ; to-morrow no new thing.

Jerusalem, March 1941. L. K. LAWLER.

## KNOWLEDGE

I KNOW but that she tells me what is true.
I know not if the sun shall rise this day,
Nor if the moon shall ride the star-way down,
Through white cloud-forests, posting to the end
Of night ; nor if the inn where Time calls " Friend " !
To weary travellers speeded out of life
Is warm or cold, if draughts blow off the froth
Of death's deep drink, or whether steam and stove
And bubbling punch invite oblivion.
I know not if the wind has told my tale,
And envious blasts will seek to sweep me off
My high, immortal throne, or wrap me in
A breathless whirlwind brown with desert dust.
I know not if my strength will overcome,
And know not if it matters that it do.
I know but that she tells me what is true.

Corporal, S.A. Army, Durban. W. F. ATKINS.

EVELYN RYAN HYDE (Mrs. C. E. Hyde), San Francisco : Nothing could give me more satisfaction than sending my membership dues for another year. Right at this particular time I feel it is an especial honour to be affiliated with an organization carrying on so splendidly under fire. The things for which The Poetry Society stands are the things which will remain long after wars are history. We hope that Britons all feel that all Americans *worthy of the name* are behind you firmly.

# DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: XC

Of Dr. Marie I. Rasey, Bruce Humphries, her publishers, notify me "Dr. Rasey, author of *Yet Speaking*, is one of the most eminent women psychologists in America. A graduate of Western State Teachers College and University of Michigan from which she holds three degrees, Dr. Rasey also studied in Austria with Dr. Alfred Adler, earning her practical and theoretical diploma from the International Institute of Individual Psychology in Vienna. At present she is Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at Wayne Univers ty, Detroit."

This poet has drawn from the pages of the Bible personalities that suited her purpose and has handled them with power and beauty in this series of interpretive verse-portraits. Here we meet Samson and Pilate and Job, reviewing their problems through the skill with which Dr. Rasey has portrayed them.

The opening poem is very arresting—"Dust"

Dust of the street cast up by many wheels,
Dust of the plain caught up by vagrant winds,
Dust of the dead from funeral pyres cold,
Dust,
Dust,
Ceaselessly.

Aye, ceaselessly,
For though the lips are stilled that erstwhile spoke,
Their dust moves on. It forms to other lips,
Wisdom-fraught.

Dust upon dust, it comes its wingèd way
Into the portals of my house.
My lips, my eyes, my very self appears
Wrought from the remnants
Of the unremembered
Years.

Aye, it is those years.
Compound of their dust it follows out the urge it must.
What once has sought is forever seeking.
What once has spoken is
Yet speaking.

The character of Pilate has been a challenge to many poets, explaining or excusing or pitying him. Dr. Rasey brings him vividly before us. We quote a few of the first lines :

There he stood. Can I at all forget ?
That quiet mien, those steady eyes,
Mad though he must have been ! It was so plain,
The merest child could tell, he was not king,
Unless, indeed, King of the Poor should be his name !

He planned no conquests, knew no use
For power or panoply. Yet they, and I, too,
I suppose, let die a man for his belief.

This writer, in writing of writing, tells us that much of her writing has " been the laborious kind of thing which my professional tasks have made necessary. . . . I like it better if words can spread themselves, preen themselves in the sun, and ruffle their feathers. So it often happens that when such prose has tired my spirit, it is refreshing and heartening to say with few words the really vital and penetrating things which words can do."

In *The Shady Road*, a slim volume of under forty pages, Edith Courtenay Babbitt has celebrated remembered beauty, both actual and spiritual. I do not know the roads of Missouri but many of these pictures, fragrant and colourful, might be of New England's roads. " Twilight " follows :

The day has driven his gilded cart
Over the mountain top ;
With western market for his wares,
He would not turn nor stop.

The veery flings one silver note
Above the highest pine ;
As water troubled by a stone,
The molten circles shine.

The sea gull drifts on bordered wing
Noiselessly away.
The Canterbury bells are hushed.
The crickets wax more gay.

The sheep are safe within the fold.
The cattle seek the bars.
Tired men lay down the axe and scythe,
And women wait the stars.

A crescent hangs beneath a cloud.
A far off whippoorwill
Across the rolling forest dark
Calls out, and all is still.

I note that Miss Babbitt's summer address *is* Massachussetts ! Miss Babbitt writes me that in childhood—to relieve the tedium of a punishment—she turned to writing poetry. After all, is that not what we all do ? " Poetry and Music have always gone hand-in-hand down the highways of Life. They are the two most beautiful, most loyal guardians of the Spirit, are they not ? "

War's confusion and the misery of the world are reaching sternly the poets. The genius of Miss Millay is affected by these and in her recent book, *Make Bright the Arrows*, A 1940 Notebook (Harper Bros., N.Y.; London: Hamish Hamilton), she gives expression to "themes which vitally concern every American and the cause of democracy throughout the world." There are lyrics and sonnets in this collection and the appeal and flash of the title-giving lyric follows :

Make bright the arrows,
  Gather the shields :
Conquest narrows
  The peaceful fields.

Stock well the quiver
  With arrows bright :
The bowman feared
  Need never fight.

Make bright the arrows,
  O peaceful and wise !
Gather the shields
  Against surprise.

" Memory of England (October, 1940) " gives us a glimpse into the personal thought of the war in the mind of Miss Millay :

I am glad, I think, my happy mother died
Before the German airplanes over the English countryside
Dropped bombs into the peaceful hamlets that we used to know—
Sturminster-Newton, and the road that used to run
Past bridge, past cows in meadow,
Warm in the sun,
Cool in the elm-tree's shadow,
To the thatched cottage roofs of Shillingstone ;
Dropped bombs on Romsey Abbey, where the aging record show
(Or did a little while ago)
In faded ink and elegant fine hand
The name of a boy baby christened there
In 15— (I forget the year)
Later to sail away to this free land
And build in what is now named Massachusetts a new Romsey here.

In the empire of sonneteers Miss Millay stands among the foremost. From the sequence at the close of the book, we will read the sixth :

I must not die of piety ; I must live ;
Grow strong, not sicken, eat, digest my food,
That it may build me, and in doing good
To blood and bone, broaden the sensitive

Fastidious pale perception ; we contrive
Lean comfort for the starving, who intrude
Upon them with our pots of pity : brewed
From stronger meat must be the broth we give.

Blue, bright September day, with here and there
On the green hills a maple turning red,
And white clouds racing in the windy air !—
If I would help the weak, I must be fed
In wit and purpose, pour away despair
And rinse the cup, eat happiness like bread.

*Wild Heron*, the fifth volume of poems by Daniel Whitehead Hicky, (Harper Bros., N.Y.), is a book one is glad to have near,—to journey with Mr. Hicky through the places he has been, to meet some of his dearer friends and to know the joy he takes in telling these.

It is interesting to know that this writer left the cotton business in 1924 to devote his time to writing. A native of Georgia, he has travelled far ; Europe, Egypt, the Holy Land, Africa, South America and the West Indies. To one who has been fortunate enough to journey a bit, it means a certain furnishing in the background of one's mind. This travel seems to seep through the mind continually.

Before we turn to the sonnet sequence entitled " Westwall and Maginot, January, 1940 " and also part of the title " Again the Road," let us enjoy a picture of " Island Moonrise "—

Scented with oleanders' breath
The hesitant darkness falls
Along the leaves still warm with sun.
At slow white intervals

The gulls go by, their sharpened cries
Dividing sky and land,
Then all is darkly one again :
The sky, the tide, the sand.

Only the drowsy grasses stir
Till bright, and suddenly,
Like a lone bather now, the moon
Slips in the quiet sea.

If we might linger in this mood but we turn to " Again the Road "—

Again the selfsame road their feet have trod !
Remembered villages and trees grown back,
New bridges now, new helmets for their head,
Familiar meadows for the first attack !
How easily they slip from days of peace
To war again, as one might change a suit ;
Or was it peace, or but an armistice ?—

The same dark enemy, the bitter fruit . . .
Down, down, into the bowels of the earth
They go to man dark instruments that whirl
A generation south, or east, or north,
Unleash a tide of gases that will curl
In driven waves, a sea of death controlled
As casually as a cigarette is rolled.

Another of the sonnets in this sequence, " The Dead "—

The guns' slow thunder dies with darkening day.
The hilltop runs with blood, grows musical
With failing breath and words the dying say
To names unknown. Their faltering fingers trail
The smoking earth for sustenance as might
A child reach for a warm, familiar breast ;
Withdrawing, stiffened now beneath the night,
Close fast upon their futile pinch of dust,
They are the dead, the seed of centuries
Turned under by the sharpened spade of war ;
Above them now the blackened vulture flies,
Maggots drink at the river of each scar,
Blow out, ye bugles, far and high and shrill !
Victorious, the dead have taken this hill !

The preface to *Dark Music*, by Wilbur Chapman Goodson (Falmouth Publishing House, Portland, Me.), is written by a friend of Mr. Goodson, a New Englander, standing in the forefront of New England's poets—Wilbert Snow. He tells us that, " this poet, beyond his deep and lasting love of poetry, has loved his poultry farm at Tamworth, New Hampshire," which brings to mind a humorous happening : On my brother-in-law's private car, making a tour of the States, just before reaching Houston, Texas, newspaper men boarded the train and had a word with Mr. Tyng, my brother-in-law. He described the party beside Mrs. Tyng, Mrs. Alice Hunt Bartlett, American editor of The Poetry Review, etc., as he drew into the station, on looking out of the window of the car, one saw a dozen farmers with the handsomest roosters and hens in their arms. They came on our car and clamoured to meet the Editor of the *Poultry* Review !

This is a lovable book, overflowing with the charm of poetry as instanced in the following : " Nightpiece " :

Here in the quiet woods the night creeps in—
Between the slowly falling flakes of snow—
And burrows down to soft and silent sleep.

Here in the quiet woods, the topmost boughs
Of tamarack reach up against the clouds
Too thick to let the light of stars shine through.

Here in a deep and never-ending peace
There is a silence thick and velvet black
That settles over hills and leafless trees
And brings dark music to my tired ears.

Here in the early hours of dawn the stars
Break through the clouds, and wrinkled moonlight smiles
Across the frozen pond and snow-filled fields.

It must have been like this once long ago.

Mr. Goodson writes us :

" Poetry offers a challenge to the author for he must state his thoughts clearly with no wasted words. This challenge is stimulating. * * * I write it because I like to make a few small words paint large pictures."

There is beauty of line and image in the poems of this writer. It is evident that this first book presages others to come which we will want to read.

*Down This Road* is Eva Willes Wangsgaard's second book (Wings Press, California). She writes us from Ogden, Utah :

" My one hope is that I shall always be willing to serve poetry and my great longing is to be able to extend to others the richness which I know poetry can add to any life."

The poems in this book have emerged from a full and busy life, of wifehood and motherhood and a full time job of teaching history and geography to two hundred children each day.

In a world war-torn to weariness, we stop to read a poem so entitled :

Come, Winter, cradle me upon your breast
Beneath your shawl of softly folded wool ;
I have grown weary of the year's unrest ;
Of wild ambitions I am overfull.

I have known Spring and loved her rooted gold ;
I have loved Summer wrapped in pastel skies ;
I have known Autumn, loved her gallant hold
On pageantry and colour while she dies.

But Spring has roused my hopes beyond my strength,
But Summer's heat has seared my feeble will ; . . .

I have grown weary of prismatic light
That lent ambition's lamb a Golden Fleece ;
My heart has need of patient gray and white.
Come, Winter, wrap my weariness in peace.

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

*To the Editor :*

# THE WALLER-AUDEN POLICY

## An American's Cogent Criticism

May a rank outsider inject himself in a " private " debate : Fleming *versus* Waller *et el* ? The question, as I understand it, is as follows : " In order to preserve himself to produce his works of art, the genius is justified in evading normal obligations to protect himself against material or physical dangers." The Waller group uphold the affirmative.

There are, of course, several parts to this question : (1) Would it have been proper for Aeschylus, Shakespeare, or Milton, certain of their genius and their importance to posterity, to have left the physical dangers involved in the defence of one's home in the hands of those obviously of less artistic potentiality ? (2) Speaking contemporaneously, in any age, have the true geniuses—the admittedly only great assets to posterity—been definitely and absolutely adjudged so by any personal or clique evaluations ? (3) Could any man involved in evolving the " ideal "—attempting to utter the deeper poetic truths which present life in its fulness, and satisfy our passions and longings for what is the real meaning of life—be of any great value to art or to the " longings " of posterity, if, during his life, he shirked any part of the normal human obligations ? As a foot-note to this, we must realize that the genius-artist is invariably interested in human beings and their relationships not only with one another but also with nature in all of its manifestations.

(1) Contemporaneous evidence, particularly under the stress of these times, is apt to be biased ; therefore, it seems logical to turn to those minds acknowledged by posterity these many years as the greatest—the unquestioned geniuses. The story of Socrates and his belief in his obligations to his " state " is probably the most " ideal " ever recorded. He died because he placed the " good of the state " above the obvious truth of his teachings. And in that death we have the greatest " poem " of Periclean Greece. Milton stated that a liberal education is that which " fits a man to perform justly, skillfully, and magnanimously, all the offices both private and public, of peace and *war*." He would bring about a *citizen* who will perform his duties as a citizen, whatever they may be, with justice and greatness of mind. I find no exceptions made for geniuses acknowledged or self-anointed. We also know that Milton had no use for a " cloistered and fugitive virtue " and that there was but one freedom that he demanded for himself—the " freedom of my mind." That in itself denies the right of a physical freedom when the obligations of the " citizen " are involved. His actions, of course, supported his statements. He, for the benefit of duty, submerged " that one talent which is death to hide " and blinded himself in the service and in a complete forgetfulness of self.

To go into even higher reaches of thought : Christ did not evade

crucifixion. Be you atheist or devil, you must be fully aware that His actions represent the greatest " poem " of Christendom. By comparison Mahommed with his *Hegira* pales to a lesser epic ; nevertheless, the Hegira was not an " escape " in the sense advocated by Mr. Waller. Mohammed escaped to newer and greater dangers ; his was a strategic withdrawal with future battlefields in mind.

At this point I must plead ignorance : I have never read of a truly great man—genius, if you will, in recorded history who actually followed the Waller-Auden policy. And I am speaking not of self- but of posterity-anointed supermen.

(2) The second element of the question involves indirectly the preceding statement. Who, after all, is a genius ? How is he known ? Has any genius been recognized with absolute assurance during his life time ? As time has always been the prime tester, the answer is obvious : artistic genius has never been recognized with unanimity or assurance during the contemporaneous period. Therefore we have a valid right to question any man who shouts " I am a genius ! " and runs away. As a matter of fact, the colossal nerve involved is a psychological proof to the contrary. It is, in fact, almost a conclusive proof of actual ineptitude and minor proportions.

(3) Any man completely submerged with the " ideal "—man in his relations with human beings, would as a result of the very nature of what I might term his " fanaticisms " rise above the thought of material safety and desire the opportunity for a tempering of self. Though contemporaneously horrible, the crucible of war has a tempering flame : Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, Joyce Kilmer and others proved their purity of reasoning in death. Had they done otherwise, we would have been forced to realize that what is untrue in one particular is actually untrue in all particulars. In other words, they could not have written so " wisely well."

I am not aware that Shakespeare felt that he was a genius. His Sonnet XXIX that begins :

> " When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes
> I all alone beweep my outcast state,"

suggest, very little faith in himself. I believe that the more you know the more you know you don't know ; hence, by that secondary comparison the primary genius is appalled at his own ignorance and lack of ability. Only mediocrity is sure. God bless stupidity ; how happy it makes the little man—and, fortunately, he never knows his error.

I don't want to make any personal criticisms as I question my powers to discern ; nevertheless, if Auden is a genius my whole conception of poetry is erroneous and all my time and thought involved has been wasted. In my faulty opinion, Auden and his whole " gang " have missed " poetic conception " almost entirely. Mr. Fleming, whose stand I uphold but whose arguments are weak, brought up Dunkirk. To me there was more poetry dramatically enacted during that one week than the English-speaking poets will ever compass. Poetry or

art, after all, is the mere grasping of the great—the " ideal " moment and perpetuating it with " timeless " strokes for posterity. England and Englishmen rose to a very high and splendid abstract level during those hectic, passing moments. They ceased to be involved with the " material "—the personalized, which are the antithesis of the " ideal,"; those involved were, I repeat, dramatic poets, re-enacting the finest and most beautiful in human relationships. Auden and his group will never produce anything in the same sublime category; and, in their present state of mind, will never capture that " ideal " moment to hand on, with their crucified genius, as a permanent asset to future civilizations. For this, England needs another Shakespeare or at least a Tennyson—one who could say " I am a part of all that I have met " in a realization of the tempering influence of experience and his appreciation of the necessary high and dangerous actions to " become a name."

San Rafael, California, April 27th. CULLEN JONES
(Major, U.S.A., Ret. Recalled to active service.)

### A HYPOTHETICAL CASE

One important point in the Auden controversy appears to have been overlooked; so although I feel little qualified to express an opinion, I have ventured to put it into verse:

The press-gang took a Warwickshire lad—
Of Stratford town was he—
They pressed him aboard a Queen's ship
And sent him out to sea.

Will was keeping a starboard watch
All on a moonless night,
When he was aware of a Seraph there,
In garments all of light.

" Hail to thee, Will," the Angel said;
And he—" I am but young—
Must I die with my tales untold
And all my songs unsung? "

" There is never a gunner in Philip's fleet,
Nor any wave of the sea
(Except it be by the will of God)
Can take thy life from thee.

If God determine the world have need
Of plays which are thine alone,
Thou shalt come safely home again
That so thy work be done;

But if God can raise to Abraham

Children out of the stones,
Can He not raise a poet up
Though the sea should have thy bones ? "

Calverley, Leeds, May 20th. D. E. CHRISTINE TOMLIN.

### A CRITICISM OF MR. WALLER

Mr. John Waller and some others should pay more attention to the exact meaning of words. For most people " progress " means social amelioration. To oppose such amelioration is to be " reactionary." Neither progress nor reaction has anything to do with literary technique which is only a matter of fashion and taste.

Most of our traditional poets have been progressive in sympathy, while the leader of the modernist lot is an elderly gentleman who believes—so I understand—in the divine right of kings. Mr. Eliot's critical doctrine is but the literary equivalent of the historical theories of Messrs. Belloc and Chesterton : England was happiest in the Middle Ages ; since then we have been steadily going from bad to worse owing to the influence of the Protestants, the Puritans, and the Parliamentarians ! So Mr. Eliot wants us to believe that our literature was at its best before it existed, and has gradually been corrupted by the Protestant Spenser, the Puritan Milton and Shelley the nasty Whig atheist. There are no poets in England worth mentioning except a few parsons whose royalism and high churchianity are beyond reproach ; and, of course, Ezra Pound is a far far better translator than Gilbert Murray who used to be a member of the Rationalist Press Association !

On those parts of the Continent where " clericalism " holds sway this sort of " criticism " is well-known and understood. It is only in England that " progressive " people are " taken in " by it.

Mr. John Waller doesn't want to fight the Germans. He wants to fight the spirit of compulsion everywhere. Doesn't he know that there is no such thing as absolute freedom, and that all civilization depends on *some* sort of compulsion. How can he overthrow the Royal Academy without compulsion ? And how on earth in the name of clear thinking can anyone make war on the Albert Memorial ?

This is not a squabble between the old and the young. If a majority of Mr. Waller's generation thought as he does, the Gestapo would already be parked in Oxford, and he would have something to do besides fussing about bad films and poor novels. His attitude is typical of certain " intellectual " cliques irrespective of age. So far as I can see there is nothing in it but the carping of superior persons, determined to draw attention to themselves by always being " agin the majority."

Burton-on-Trent, May 16th. WALTER BURTON.

### RETORTS TO MR. FLEMING

I feel I must protest against some of the opinions expressed by Mr. Fleming in the May–June number of THE POETRY REVIEW.

First—it may be true that " youth is always apt to blame the bungling of its elders for anything it finds uncomfortable." But they do sometime " bungle " and when so convicted are they more ready to acknowledge their fault than the young ?

That there is something wrong with the general international relationship when hostilities become possible must surely be recognized ? War is not caused merely by the ravings of a lunatic (even a Hitler) or because of the sins of one guilty nation, as some people like to make out—perhaps to save themselves the trouble of unpalatable thought. There are many to-day (of the older as well as the younger generation) who believing that " force must be met by force " think that some at least of the reasons for the present world situation lie at the door of our policies and that not on account of its pacifist tendencies. But can it really be shown that Youth is the culprit ? Is it, or was it ever in a position to guide the destiny of this or any other country ? Influence and experience still count for a good deal in every walk of life,—and I for one do not deny that the latter has some justification, nor is it likely that if youth had been at the helm during those difficult and dangerous post-war years that it would have steered any better ; but to blame Youth alone is surely quite a false statement. Universal suffrage at twenty-one does not imply equal power in administration.

Again as to the " widely advertised resolutions never to fight for King and Country," who were most responsible for this ? The undergraduates or the press ? It has always seemed very odd to me that this small incident should have attracted so much publicity, especially when most pacifist propaganda gets just no hearing at all. And I should like to point out that when George Lansbury visited Hitler (as an Embassy of Reconciliation) he made it perfectly clear that Britain was not pacifist, and that if attacked she would certainly fight.

Besides to refuse to take part in war on Christian or humanitarian or even on rational grounds is not decadent or degenerate.

While the question whether Auden happens to be a genius or only a second rate poet is beyond the point (by the way I believe the same controversy raged during the last war over Charlie Chaplin !)—what may be right for one man, can be all wrong for another and none have the right to dictate what a fellow being should do. His choice of action must be irrespective of what his particular contribution may be to the community—unless you believe in the Nazi philosophy that " the State is all."

The issue is that if this war is truly fought in defence of Liberty and the Rights of the Individual, then as a democracy we must allow others their point of view and personal idiosyncrasy, even if these may be rather awkward for us, or even to our disadvantage. The matter at stake is " not Germany *versus* England, but authoritarianism *versus* freedom of thought ; repression *versus* persuasion ; dogma *versus* toleration ; force *versus* reason ; in a word, the Nazi spirit *versus* demo-

cratic liberty. The dangers inherent in such a lack of understanding are very great, in that it could cause the winning of the war to result in the loss of those principles for which the war is being waged."

It is, I think, true that the younger generation seems to see this more plainly than the old. Is it a portent of a " New Society " of wider and more liberal toleration and freedom or only the eternal revolutionary inherent in the heart of all youth since time began, and which with the passing of the years grows so easily into the conservative and the dictatorial authoritarian ?

As to Phyllis Lyth's implication that Auden is a coward and as such is likely to forfeit what chance he had of being a great poet—well, morally bad men have often proved themselves good artists and heroes very poor ones ! Though there is the under-lying truth that if you practise what you preach, your preaching carries the added weight of sincere conviction. Also most pacifists are not " precious "—if that means they are afraid for their skins ! They simply believe that " all war is incompatible with the teaching of Christ, and its means do not justify its aims however noble."

Kingston Hill, May 20th. FIONA CAMPBELL.

Although I agree, in the main, with Mr. Vandermere Fleming that many modern poets try to pass off " clotted nonsense " as " beauty, and wisdom, and a master mind," yet I realize also what the modern poet is up against and I sympathize to some extent with his point of view.

To quote Professor Ifor Evans of London University : " The difficulty of the writer is that words are used for all everyday purposes, so that they become worn, like coins rubbed by long use. *The poet, more than any other writer, tries to look at words afresh.*" Does not this explain, in part at least, the determination of Messrs. Auden and Co. to be *original* at all costs,—even by the sacrifice of lucidity, harmony and other qualities that we traditionalists instinctively associate with poetry ? In his anxiety to escape from the banal, the sentimental, the hackneyed, many a modern poet has swung to the other extreme and has produced verse as obscure and unemotional as the average legal document. Others have made a cult of ugliness, delighting in brutal similes whose only merit is originality. " To-morrow for the young, the poets exploding like bombs " is a fair example of what may be called the hit-you-below-the-belt school of poetry.

But those of us who feel homesick for the gentler, less breath-taking metaphors of Keats and Shelley should remember that it would be strange and unnatural if the poets of to-day followed meekly in the footsteps of yesterday. Keats and Shelley lived in a very different world. Who could conceive or bring forth an " Ode to the Nightingale " in a London racked by fire and high explosives ? True, Mr. Auden has gone to America, but even there he cannot be immune from the echoes and repercussions of this world-shaking conflict.

Young poets, like chameleons, take colour from their environment. We should blame the period, not the poet, for the latter's shortcomings. In a new world of peace and leisure and unhindered creative activity I believe that Poetry will once again " blossom as the rose."

Epsom, May 26th. MARY MAIR.

Mr. Fleming appears to be wasting his own time and the time of those of your readers who are at pains to correct him. A representative of a distant and more comfortable age, he is out of sympathy with anything that savours of innovation or change. Even the innocuous Prufrock is anathema, and nothing that I, or Mr. Waller, or anyone else say will convince him of his folly.

I once heard Mr. Fleming read some of his own verse at a meeting of The Poetry Society. I prefer Eliot. If I may be allowed to use an analogy, I would rather have an original Cézanne on my study wall than a reproduction of an Old Master. That is a personal opinion which I happen to share with many others. At the same time, I am perfectly willing to admit that there *may* be people who admire the verse that Mr. Fleming produces, and for that reason I refrain from attacking his integrity as an artist. I only wish that Mr. Fleming could be persuaded to display a like tolerance towards my contemporaries.

Kensington, W.8, May 31st. FRANCIS CECIL KING.

### TWO USES OF IMAGERY

The lines :

" When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table "

are cited by Mr. Fleming as an example of " grotesque rubbish." May I ask space to answer him ?

The use of imagery, both metaphor and simile, in poetry is always designed towards further evocation : but in two different ways. Firstly, certain fairly exact comparisons are intended to show actual resemblance between two objects, leading on to wider analogies. I will use one of my own poems to illustrate this ; the example, if a less good one than I might have found elsewhere, is simpler for me to demonstrate, as at least I cannot be accused of not knowing my own meaning.

In the poem " Shore In Time of War " which appeared in the last issue of the REVIEW, are the lines :

" A gull flashes through the air, a scythe through wheat
where silver fish scales follow each on each
and a blood orange of sun falls on water
to swallow deep in red their little death."

The whole poem is a line etching, detailed and deliberately without colour, except for that one vivid splash as point of focus and contrast. There, the resemblance between blood orange and sun is an actual one

leading on to the deeper meaning; the war's universal crimson, swallowing the "little deaths" of individual tragedies.

It is especially difficult to deal exactly with other people's imagery, but these opening lines of Eliot's in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" seem to be an illustration of the second mode d'emploi: a comparison which is not a literal one at all, but something deeper and subtler. First, the startling suggestion, which makes the reader look again. Evening does not—obviously could not—actually resemble an etherised patient on a table, but it does resemble him in tempo, in a sense in mood—it creates the impression in the reader which evening does, which presumably is just what Eliot intended. To appreciate such imagery, however, the reader must in a lesser degree share the emotional experience which led to its creation in the first place; his sensitivity must somewhere fit into that of the author. Therefore, its appeal may be less wide—though undoubtedly deeper—than that of the first kind. Surely Mr. Fleming, himself a poet, can appreciate that sense of suspended animation, of awaiting "something we know not," which evening brings? The world is fast going down into the dark—dark not of its own making—exactly as an etherized person does. Slipping over an edge. . . .

When one dissects this particular piece of imagery, one comes to the conclusion that it is—Mr. Fleming to the contrary—quite brilliantly effective. Eliot takes the most hackneyed idea he could, the resemblance between dark overtaking the world and a person falling asleep, and re-states it so as to give it a completely fresh and vivid aspect,—the essence of poetic treatment.

It is a strange and interesting fact that, as a whole, this generation seems to understand and appreciate the work of certain more or less contemporary writers and painters, whereas that of Mr. Fleming does not. Being lucky enough to have equally close friends among people of both generations, I can state this as a fact proved from personal experience. What is the change—and when did it come about? After all, there is as much difference in age between Mr. Eliot and me, as there is between Mr. Fleming and him; but the difference forward seems not to count whereas the difference backwards does. I would like to hear some other opinion on this; like all women, I am better at feeling a result than at working out how it came about.

I said certain contemporaries, but speaking personally I must confess complete inability to appreciate the work of such writers as Henry Treece and Philip O'Connor; they seem either boring or disgusting,—either of which qualities damns a work of art, which when all is said and done is something intended to be enjoyed.

Aylesford, Kent, June 8th. MARGUERITE EDGELOW.

"CONTROVERSIAL CORRESPONDENCE"

At a time when the whole world is passionately and tragically involved in what we are told is a conflict of ideologies, must members

of a Society instituted "to promote a clearer, deeper sense of the best in poetry and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it" themselves indulge in so much controversy? I refer of course to the section in THE POETRY REVIEW headed "Controversial Correspondence."

During a war, when emotion is heightened out of all reasonable proportion, and feeling runs high even on matters which normally would arouse little interest, it seems more than ever essential for those who serve a common ideal—whether it be religion, poetry, art in any form, or any scheme for the amelioration of human conditions—to *sink* their differences, not deliberately emphasize, multiply and augment them. But the poison of war seeping subtly but all too surely into the mind encourages warfare in every department of life and thought, and even the fondest of friends and truest of lovers tend to find themselves, unless constantly watchful, embroiled in passionate and bitter disagreements which can prove as destructive in personal relationships as, in the wider dimension, war itself.

This is pre-eminently the time when builders, not destroyers, are needed, and controversy is always destructive. It proves stimulating only to those whose minds thrive on a poison-diet, and these are not the children of light.

May I urge the Editor of THE POETRY REVIEW to say now with Coleridge: "And here ends, I trust, the controversial—from which I have seldom seen much good come even in conversation—and never anything but evil when letters have been the vehicle."

Amberley, Glos., May 30th. DALLAS KENMARE.

## IN DEFENCE OF "IN DEFENCE OF AGE"

Dulcie Eden Greville says "the chief essence of poetry is truth." I agree. But there are two sides to most questions—both may be true—hers seems as one-sided as mine. As justification for her views she quotes her "husband's great-aunt aged 103, making pillow lace and enjoying her supper beer." Does the enjoyment of supper beer denote a higher state of intelligence than "sucking sugar plums"? In my poem "When I am Old and Full of Sleep," I was writing of *one* aspect of age—she in hers portrays another. Surely the mere fact of enjoying food and drink is animal, and lace-making may become mechanical. Neither calls for highly intellectual qualities.

Perhaps Mrs. Greville would say "The Cry of the Children" should not have been written because it was not a true picture, as *all* children were not ill-treated.

I, too, have known ageless souls who have long passed the allotted span of three-score-years-and-ten, yet still retain the spirit of youth, gaiety of heart, and full mental faculties—"those whom the gods love die young." Age is not a matter of years. It is the stuff put into it that counts. I have known blasé old people of seventeen!

In contrast to *her* picture of old age, there is the pitiful state of senile

decay which *my* poem portrays, when the body has outlived the mind, and the brain has ceased to function normally—that "*cold, redundant lump of clay*," at which she takes umbrage. "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty," but has she not discovered that truth may be ugly too? I make no claim for the merits of my poem—the Editor has passed judgment—but does not Mrs. Greville agree that to do his best work the poet must be honest, and write first and foremost to please himself, and if he pleases the public his cup of joy is full to overflowing? —EDITH M. WALKER, Bournemouth, May 26th.

Mrs. Whitaker Thompson, Jamaica Plain, Mass., to Miss Edith M. Walker, Bournemouth, April 28th: Please allow me to add my little message of appreciation of your poem in the April POETRY REVIEW, "When I am old," to those you must have already received from other octogenarians like myself. It is comforting to find its concluding note among much that is cynical or vapid in modern literature. May blessing follow your work from grateful recipients.

ACCEPTANCE: A contribution to the "Defence of Age" from MARGUERITE EDGELOW:

Men shall find peace in union
earth unto earth, yet not apart from will:
peace in renunciation
of those wild dreams that youth remembers still.

They who have felled the trees of pride
have slain the memory with the pain.
Only a future generation can decide
whether the sacrifice was vain.

The sky's unwoven tissue
of solitude is scarred above high hills
that cold has sainted with its issue
slowing the passage of once ardent rills.

### A CENTURY OF THOMAS HARDY

I would not have written again except for the fact that Mr. Peel accuses me of making the issue in my letter one of first "Christianity *v.* Scepticism"; secondly, "that I dislike Hardy's works because the man was not a Christian"—neither of which is correct.

With regard to the first there is no mention of such an issue in any form, and as to the second whether Hardy was a Christian (or not) does not come within the range of my criticism. My contention is of Hardy's attitude to life. Mr. Peel says in his article (March-April issue) "When all has been said and done his cry was not so much

against the Church, as against the system of life." And that to me is Hardy's failure.

"He looked at life and dared to say it had been illconceived." And that is evidence of Hardy's colossal vanity.

Mr. Peel may call it sacred history or mythology, it matters not which to me, the record stands: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." And Hardy never wrote anything so convincing as that.

When Mr. Peel says: "Jesus of Nazareth for instance—and Newton may be said to have lived ahead of their time—which is a creditable achievement—but Hardy's achievement is even more creditable," etc. —and this despite—"a squabble which ceased to engage my interest, soon after I came down from Oxford." Then I submit his remark about Jesus is (unintentionally) a mild form of blasphemy.

Millions of men and women the world over, in the Church, and outside the Church recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the greatest figure in human history. Again: "Peace upon earth was said: we sing it" is perfectly true, but to say "And pay a million priests to bring it," is to say the least—a lie.

It is quite true I do judge aesthetic matters by ethical standards, for they have no other basis. When I am told that "to Hardy such things as cancer, blindness, insanity, and world war were incompatible with the doctrine of a Loving Shepherd"—well, Hardy would need to produce more substantial evidence than his idea. Men's cowardice will often make them throw their responsibility upon God, or the Loving Shepherd, whichever you like, rather than face up to common facts.

I am sorry Mr. Peel is so unfortunate in the three poets he mentions, presuming why I would reject them, which is outside the present case. I will content myself by saying that for natural sin there is both human and divine forgiveness, but for unnatural lust, there surely can be no forgiveness from God or man.

"Lust
Is sweetness
Gone sour and waste."

Sacred History or mythology, Mr. Peel, tells what happened to a city called Sodom, and why.

I would like to remind Mr. Peel that Christianity and optimism are two of the fundamentals of Art, and there is no reason why people should not read Hardy, but I would not recommend him as a suitable guide and philosopher.

The closing sentences in the paragraph (at the end of Mr. Peel's article) from Marie Stopes's article on Hardy, are very illuminating, "Most people bore him terribly, they will ask such silly questions"; "He was hurt by some people, as well as bored, and the chief hurts I have encountered with him, were connected with his poetry." Exactly, he who runs may read. In my opinion Hardy was a novelist, and not a poet—in the true sense.

May I invite Mr. Peel to read in the current issue of POETRY REVIEW the poem on page 136 by Aidan Clarke. " The Best is yet to be," especially the lines :

" By balanced minds in tune with singing hearts,
By the One Spirit guiding the many-in-one."

And also in July–August issue, 1940, the article by Geoffrey Masefield, " The Mind of the Poets." In conclusion I would like to express my appreciation of the contributions of E. M. Harrison and I. Sutherland Groom, on Thomas Hardy.

Berry Brow, Huddersfield, May 27th. ALBERT H. HODGES.

THE GEORGIAN GROUP

In the June issue of THE POETRY REVIEW occurred a reference to Sir Edward Marsh as " a perfervid Georgian, successfully sponsoring poets who have now passed into oblivion." Among these now unremembered versifiers are Flecker, Edmund Blunden, Walter de la Mare, W. H. Davies, D. H. Lawrence, Rupert Brooke, Ralph Hodgson, Siegfried Sassoon, James Stephens, Wilfred Gibson, Harold Monro, Gordon Bottomley and Lascelles Abercrombie ; together with many another safely buried corpse, whose dust will remain undisturbed now forever, save by the fingers of some patient and enquiring pedant.

" That ship of priceless wares, Oblivion " has been presented recently with a number of illustrious names. An enthusiastic press-gang, headed by Dr. Leavis, has even managed to ensnare John Milton among its crew ; and no one will ever read again, except for dark academic ends, *The Listeners*, *The Golden Journey to Samarkand*, *The Fish*, *Everyone Sang* or *King Lear's Wife*. " What virtue yet sleeps in this *terra damnata* and aged cinders were petty magick to experiment. . . ."

I do not know by what authority your reviewer so peremptorily dismisses a whole decade of English poets ; but I suspect that, as soon as the last note of their funeral march dies away, he will announce as pontifically the " dislodgment " of Auden and Dylan Thomas and MacNeice. The disparagement of one's immediate predecessors is the most popular form of self-assertion : but the function of a creative and critical Review is surely, above all, to keep a sense of values ? To despise the obvious is a cheap way of appearing clever, but to deny that Rupert Brooke was a poet at all is as uncritical as to hail him as a second Keats.

The Georgians at present are out of fashion and their world in ruins. Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach* means more to us in our darkness than all the nostalgic pastoralism of the twenties. But we would be rich indeed if, for that reason, we could afford to " forget " thirty of our poets. If a poem is ever alive it is always alive : and it seems to me the proudest function of THE POETRY REVIEW to be catholic—to be alert enough to recognize the poets of to-day and to-morrow, but never so blinded by prejudice or the turns of fashion that it dismisses those of yesterday. I venture to think that, long after your reviewer has

himself passed into oblivion, lovers of poetry will still obstinately persist in re-reading the forgotten Georgians.

Maidenhead, June 9th. RONALD FULLER.

[We believe the phrase quoted by Mr. Fuller was intended to be taken collectively, certain individuals excepted. Mr. John Masefield and Mr. G. K. Chesterton were nominally included in this group, but remained outside and independent of it. They, with Mr. Walter de la Mare, Mr. W. H. Davies, Mr. W. W. Gibson, and Mr. James Stephens, had already established an individual reputation and penetrated the outer world to which the remarkably successful "Georgian Books" carried the lesser known satellities of an arbitrarily termed and dated group who had been inclined to despise popularity as a proof of mediocrity or worse. Prescient contemporary criticism is not easy: not safe to be olympian; we all have our blind spots and prejudices, but THE POETRY REVIEW has tried to follow the advice of Augustine Birrell, "Let us be catholic in this great matter and burn our candles at many shrines, wearing no liveries, prescribing no paths, but seeking only to recognize truth and beauty, wherever and whenever they may be found."—ED.]

A MODERNISTIC POET TO A NOVITIATE? "suggested by Mr. Herbert Palmer's brilliant attack in the May–June POETRY REVIEW. The term 'modernistic' is intended and corresponds to 'hellenistic' as distinct from 'hellenic' poetry."

Poems? Fill them with statistics,
Stretched elastics and gymnastics,
Let the Algebra of death
On them breathe.
With rationed petrol fill the founts
Of poetry. Say what you like
To strike
And blast their minds with doubtful scenes.
It does not matter what verse means,
But what you make them think it means that counts.
Wrap your thoughts in stolen paper—
Forget to tie the string,
Then watch young poets prance and caper
Because they think you sing.
But ever let your careful hand
Be ready to reverse—
Some other method to rehearse,
Lest one day they should understand.

Newstead Abbey. MARGERY SMITH.

YORKSHIRE DIALECT VERSE

After the war is won the Yorkshire Dialect Society hopes to publish

a book of Yorkshire dialect verse. The editors would be glad to receive poems, which should be typewritten, and the envelopes marked "Yorkshire Dialect Verse."

Poems from the North Riding should be addressed to the President, Dorothy Una Ratcliffe, Temple Sowerby Manor, Temple Sowerby, Westmorland; those from the East Riding, to the Chairman, Mr. Austin Hyde, The Grove, Beacon Park, Pickering; and those from the West Riding to the Honorary Editorial Secretary, Mr. Wilfrid Halliday, Gavrelle, 5 Armley Grange Drive, Leeds, 12.

DOROTHY UNA RATCLIFFE.

I am now at work on the compilation of an Anthology of Catholic Poetry and shall be pleased if any Catholic contributors to THE POETRY REVIEW who might like to be represented will send their suitable MSS. to me for consideration.

I cannot offer any remuneration for poems used but I hope to find a good publisher for the book. I am fortunate in having the interest and good wishes of the Editors of *The Month* and *The Catholic Gazette* respectively. Already some fine work has been submitted in response to a letter published in *The Catholic Gazette*.

Any MSS. or books submitted will be returned as soon as possible if a stamped addressed envelope is enclosed.

1 Scotts Lane, Shortlands, Kent. MARY WINTER WERE.

My letter to you, posted December 3rd, may have gone, with others, to D.J.'s locker.

I wish that the enclosed cheque could have been larger so as to further assist you to carry on during this period of supreme endeavour: a period of challenge when the poet has his great opportunity to engage his every fibre to do battle with the enemy. Yea, further, it is a period wherein we find the Soul of Britain breathing poetry, and this fragrant breath gives encouragement to millions throughout the world.

There does come an odd moment of regret and sadness; but this swiftly fades away when we encounter the poet's message in the words of the lowly charwoman—doing battle in London.

AND—
AUDEN, here in America, is snug and waiting,
His voice over the radio is smug and baiting:
How reckons he the yield?

A new query—
Where does the poet go when man in him disappears?
Ever trudging through groves of crouching, unconquered Fears?
A trackless potter's field! . . .
A moment of sadness akin to pain and sympathy:
Thumbs up! Across the seven seas Britain breathes poetry.

Again my best wishes.

New York. ELEANOR THORNE.

# THE CONTINUITY OF ENGLISH POETRY

It is fitting that the new series *Britain in Pictures* (Collins for Penns in the Rock Press, 3s. 6d.) should open with *The English Poets* by Lord David Cecil. England leads the world in literature, and poetry is her fullest throat of song. The book is admirably compiled; the illustrations are often the lesser known portraits showing the poets in their youth, which gives a charming freshness to the book. Lord David's reading matter is remarkable for its deft and discerning concision; he can sum up an individual author or a group of writers in a few revealing sentences, as in these lines: "The Georgian poets, who flourished in the first twenty years of the century, were rural romantics. The most typical of them, Edward Thomas, Edmund Blunden, and V. Sackville West, turned away from the unsympathetic atmosphere of industrial England to seek for peace in the homely charms of English country life. Contemporary with them, appeared the passionate, disordered rhapsodies of D. H. Lawrence, the sculptured eloquence of Hilaire Belloc, the fresh songs of W. H. Davies, the direct appeal of Masefield's poetry and above all the elfin loveliness of Walter de la Mare." The task of presenting the English heritage of poets to the general public without superficiality or prejudice could not have been better fulfilled. Out of the other books in this series *English Music* by W. J. Turner and *English Villages* by Edmund Blunden should be of particular interest to poetry readers. Other series from Penns in the Rock Press are *The British Commonwealth in Pictures* and *The English Poets in Pictures* (2s. 6d.). The last mentioned are edited by Dorothy Wellesley, the initial volumes being *Shelley* and *Byron*. Here again the illustrations are distinctive, the verse selections are freshly chosen, and the preface is a short critical epitome of the poet's life. *Tennyson* and *Keats* are in preparation.

The Favil Press gives encouragement to new writers in more ways than one. *Water Mist* by Frances Paul (4s. 6d.) contains delicate fragments of *vers libres* showing, within the limits of that chosen form, a sensitive interpretation of moods and environment. This quality is well shown in "The Fountain":

Oh, marble white fountain,
Chequered in the dusk,
By the moving dance of leaves;
My search for you
Has been lonely and weary.
But now I have found you,
I shall take a long deep
Draught of your waters
For they shall give me
The strength to live
More deeply,
And the knowledge
Of the grace in adversity.

One suspects, from his name, that the author of *Vision and Other Poems* (Lamley and Co., 2s. 6d.), Edgard da Rocha Miranda, is not entirely intimate with English idiom, and therefore one is not put off by occasional forcing of rhyme and syntax or an inept phrase, for the thought informing the poems is original and forceful, while sometimes one can feel a current of imagery and music almost resembling the fine surges of Roy Campbell, as in " The Centaur " :

> There is a God in me, somewhere concealed,
> Conscious and proud of his Olympic birth
> Who haughtily shall ne'er consent to yield
> His reverence for all Beauty of this Earth. . . .
> But there's a human body to this God
> Who, though in clouds his head be aureoled,
> Is made out of the common, dusty sod,
> With feet fettered in irons, though crowned with gold. . . .

As style and delivery of speech differs from speaker to speaker, so does the verse of writer and writer, and there is always some indefinable quality behind both speaker and writer, wherein we recognize the mainspring of their inspiration. *Mosaic*, the new volume by Catherine Brewster Toosey (Henry Harrison, New York, 1s.) has a forceful tangled imagery with which to clothe her forceful, if sometimes unordered, thought. The title poem dominates the book and is a reaction to a memorable visit to Italy a few years ago. It is a swift kaleidoscope recording thronged impressions, both of outward and inward values, of a country in the melting pot of history, reform and ambition, and is heady with Hopkins-like terms above a strong undertow of imaginative perception and earnestness. This is one of its stanzas :

Dead and alive is Italy's main city : alive with marchings
Of important cloaks swaggering below black-green feathers furbished
As if the cock himself wore them anew. The sons of Romulus
Are warriors again : they have sucked once more from the metal wolf !
But Remus wanders like an old artist along the pavements, dreaming
In colours a peasant holds over her breasts and sways step by stride
Above her feet : dreams himself a child down the well-water-green of her shawl ;
And the blue in her skirt folds him back through the centuries to sprawl
Asleep on the grass which swallowed Rome's life, leaving her colour and death.
Alive and dead is Rome, Italy's capital : she dies by command—
Shuttered once a week into home made prisons without light, while stand
Trams and horse carriages and motors dead : Rome blackened, made shadow
Of the beating night against no enemy—except inevitable death.

More conventional are the lines and words of Thornton Lovelace in

*Wartime Moods* (Dundas Press, Richmond, Yorks, 1s. 6d.) though here also there is forcefulness of purpose. He can afford to relax between his sterner poems of love and hate to write nonsense verses and to touch upon the lighter side of army life. " Heirloom " is a poignant poem reflecting the pathos of the modern " war-baby," especially in its first and second stanzas :—

What are his chances from the start,
  What are his hopes for joy ?
What has he got to stir his heart,
  This blameless wartime boy ?
What will he learn as years roll by,
  What will his mind recall ?
All his dreams will be filled with sky
  And the whining bombs that fall.
What will he live to call his own,
  What can the future hold ?
Only the seeds of hate are sown,
  Hate for the wrongs untold.

The great Israelitish exodus flows easily across the pages of the Rev. T. Pittaway's a new book, *Moses* (author 3s. 6d.). Paraphrase is seldom resorted to and the sharp geographical details suggest first hand evidence of the country. Here we are given the long history of Moses from from his rush-cradle to his mountain grave in a narrative poem loaded with spiritual lessons. Each ancient episode furnishes a parable for present times and a chance is never missed of pointing simple truths aptly and convincingly. *A Garland of God* by Hilda M. Orchard (Williams and Norgate, 1s. 6d.) contains a number of deeply religious lyrics of particular sincerity and sweetness. Perhaps the author's attitude towards children as well as towards God largely accounts for this :—

When you have slipped,
Shut eyed, tight lipped,
Down the grey corridor of sleep
And lie beneath
The bedclothes' sheath
In a delicious, tumbled heap.
With one last look, and one last prayer
I leave you to your Angel's care.

He spreads his wings,
Great guarding things,
And bares his curved sword's gleaming blade.
And dreams make bright
A child's long night
And innocence sleeps unafraid,
  Through all the hours till night is done
  Companioned by the Shining One.

E. D. Bangay.

More than half a hundred years ago at Cambridge a young man who had taken high honours in Classics turned over to medicine, an unusual change of studies. Quickly he attained wide renown for his skill in the treatment of children. And now Sir Frederic Still reveals (*Childhood and other Poems*, Murray, 5s.) that he is a poet whose life-long interest has been children, not only in sickness but in the joys and sorrows and hopes that fill the years from about four to seven. Here is a typical instance of his insight into the very youthful mind.

The time high noon : adown the lane
  Comes Mary with her wonted grace,
Attention eager to obtain,
  Importance written on her face.

A book with ostentation held
  To catch the casual passer's eye,
Contents not even to be spelled,
  Though Mary holds her head so high !

Of course I stop and make my bow,
  With us politeness is the rule—
And Mary feels the time is now,
  The crushing news, " I go to school,"

Or again there is the picture of the little girl absorbedly writing, who when asked by her father what she was so busy with, replied, " Daddy, I'm writing poetry." Then the father, allowed to see what she had written, said, with the tactless stupidity of a grown-up, " But, dear, it makes no sense."

Then, half in pity that he had
  Such limited intelligence,
And half provoked, she said, " But, Dad,
  I'm writing poetry, not sense."

Some of these poems seem to me to have such an appeal to an undying emotion that they may very well survive when far more ambitious efforts have been flooded by the waters of Lethe. Only the very dull and insensitive could read unmoved the poem on a rag-doll taken from a child's tomb dated about 300 A.D., or the poem about the dying little girl who clutched in one hand a faded flower and as she passed away, smiled and surrendered it to the beloved physician who was holding her other hand.

I have only one quarrel with Sir Frederic Still. What I call " High Cockney " rhymes, such as " Heine-finer," " Shore-maw," offend the ear. I know that some who count are against me. Lascelles Abercrombie assured me—Lawrence Whistler who was present concurred—that R is silent unless followed by a vowel. But to my ear, though I am far indeed from wishing to hear medial or final R turned into what the Romans called the *canina litera* and growled, slurring out jars as much as the dropping another letter which is neither stressed nor omitted

in the best speech, the initial aspirate. And most poets agree with me.
(We regret to learn that Sir Frederic died on June 28.)

The anthology compiled five years ago by Viola Meynell under the title *The Poet's Walk* has now been republished as *An Anthology of Modern Poetry*. The authors drawn upon range from Chaucer to sundry living writers, and the latter demonstrate that the belief apparently held by some that modern poetry *must* consist, for unknown reasons, of school-boy babble, meaningless cacophony, and pretentious aping of learning, is a fatuous delusion. Anybody wishing, as many do, to have at hand a volume of poems when away on holiday will find this book a delightful companion. It is surprising that in these days Messrs. Jonathan Cape can sell so handsome a volume at only 5s.

*Eight for Immortality* (Dent, 6s.) is the title given by Mr. Richard Church to a volume of essays, reprinted from the *Fortnightly Review*, on poets of to-day. Readers of THE POETRY REVIEW can be advised to put this book on their library-lists, for Mr. Church, an acknowledged poet, has produced thoughtful and attractive studies of the work of Victoria Sackville-West, Davies, de la Mare, Frost, Yeats, Blunden, Eliot, and Robert Graves. Cynics will ask, " why Eight ? Why not the mystic Nine, or Seven ? " And whatever number be selected for the constellation, only two things can be affirmed with absolute certainty ; firstly, that there would be considerable variations in the lists of names proposed for beatification, and secondly, that not all of them will ultimately " Beacon from the abode where the Eternal are."

*The song of a red turtle*, published by Poetry (London) at 1s., is a small pamphlet by George Scurfield who obligingly adds, so as to help the reader, the sub-title " Poems." The lines, in free verse, in memory of his father show feeling, but most of the poems are what has been called " school-boy cackle," coupled with the unintelligibility which seems to appeal to the unintelligent who, subconsciously, hold that whatever gets into print must have something in it.

E. VANDERMERE FLEMING

### FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OF EUROPEAN POETRY

Professor Henry Neff, of Columbia University in *A Revolution in European Poetry*, (New York : Columbia University Press ; London : Humphrey Milford, 20s.) has attempted to trace the course of poetry in the chief European literary languages, French, English, German, Italian, from 1660 to the twentieth century—an immense subject for a comparatively short treatise, but perhaps appropriately so, for the essence of poetry is brevity and conciseness. And timely also, for the poetry of the last 400 years not only mirrors the ideas, social movements and changes of taste and expression through the era of democratic ferment and industrial expansion to the present grave crisis in

European culture, but also reveals a unity which transcended national boundaries. To us as well as to American readers the chief value and interest of Dr. Neff's skilful survey of our spiritual and cultural civilization since the Renaissance are implicit in his cosmopolitan detachment. He considers that " to see European literature through British eyes is not always to have the best perspective. The distortion is likely to be considerable in regard to the poetry of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in which the chief movements were French and German and the greatest figure was not British. Yet since English is the first, and because of language barriers frequently the only European poetry known to them, Americans are disposed to accept English opinion of its relative importance." Prof. Neff proceeds to correct our insularity and to place us under German and French origins and leadership. He became acquainted with " the charming country life of French noble families " through the hospitality of the Marquise de Saint-Phalle at her Château de Montgoublin where her reading of Victor Hugo, with other readings of Baudelaire and Rimbaud and Racine, constituted " memorable initiation into the delicate art of French verse." He " had the good fortune to learn Italian from the lips of Pro. and Signora Guiseppe Prezzolini " and " as guest of Conte and Contessa Busi in their villa Travignoli, through whose courtyard John Milton passed on his way to Vallambrosa, I observed the daily life of the Tuscan countryside. One August afternoon our guest, Filippo Donini, read unforgettably from Leopardi in a sun-baked garden." In England Pro. Neff was driven " about every nook and cranny of Wordsworth's Westmorland and Cumberland " and " for knowledge of other aspects of British life " he was indebted to (among others) our old time contributor, Mrs. Joan Woolcombe. He made more comprehensive contacts in Freiburg and Frankfort, and in Berlin " again had the benefit of the wide and gracious culture of German intellectuals " and " Grafin Renbinder gave me glimpses into the cosmopolitanism of the Franconian landed gentry." It is, of course, integral to his thesis that Prof. Neff's key-men are Herder and Goethe, with Baudelaire and Hugo in France. Leopardi is their Italian counterpart, and Wordsworth the English, with Browning very slightly treated.

The end of the epoch finds poetry in decay. Jaded sophistication and reckless futility had taken the place of " that glad confident and sustained poetry were losing power and validity. . . . The poet lost faith that the support of Nature and of Nature's God made his words invincible just when he needed it most to confront stupendous material forces, the power of money and the pressure of numbers. Victor Hugo was the last to maintain with conviction and effectiveness the prophetic rôle. The hope that a wider audience would be created for poetry by the spread of literacy and of popular freedom vanished with the appearance of crass plutocrats and a mechanized proletariat where late eighteenth-century dreamers had anticipated a cultivated

middle class and peasants and artisans nurtured on folksongs. The plutocracy had become so well entrenched that the ridicule of Heine and Baudelaire, the invective of Leconte de Lisle and the scorn of Vigny seemed alike futile.

" Isolated and disillusioned in a society increasingly indifferent to spiritual values and blundering toward catastrophe, poets ceased to write of the world and turned their gaze inward to explore their most personal impressions, even into the realms of the subconscious and the unconscious. To this peculiarly intimate and delicate form of self expression the French, with the fresh energy of late converts to lyricism, led the way, and resumed leadership of European poetry. The Symbolist School abandoned the national idols of clarity and communication. Stéphane Mallarmé's allusiveness was unintelligible except to specialized readers of poetry. Jules Laforgue, even more than the aging Browning, failed to provide bridges for those who would follow the leaps of his thought. The Symbolists employed words as analogies to suggest essentially inexpressible events within highly sensitive souls, or merely for their musical and pictorial value. They recorded upwellings from the subconscious and the unconscious that revealed survivals of the primitive beneath the layers of civilization. Thus they conquered a new province for poetry. But they left the entrance open only to initiates. In defiance of the triumphs of material power and the indifference of the mass of mankind, they made poetry an inviolable sanctuary for quality and distinction. Yet confinement to the inner life and to the storied artistry of the past did not permit abiding satisfaction. From Mallarmé, the high priest of esoteric verse in the grand style, escaped a cry more despairing than any of Faust's, " Le chair est triste, hélas, et j'ai lu tous les livres."

*The Poetry of Matthew Arnold*, a Commentary by C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry (Oxford University Press, 12s. 6d.) is an admirable companion volume to the complete poetical works of a very great and fastidious poet and a remarkable tribute to that greatness. All the important facts about each of Arnold's poems is given, together with accounts of their sources, their genesis and composition, providing invaluable insight into the poet's mind and way of working and a reliable history of Arnold's thoughts and feelings during the early and most significant years of his poetic activity, the whole stimulating, to adapt Arnold's own words, " a clearer, deeper sense of the best in his poetry and the strength and joy and satisfaction to be drawn from it." This unique volume is exceptionally fully and precisely annotated and indexed.

Langston Hughes, the negro poet, novelist and playwright, now in the 40's, in his fascinating autobiography, *The Big Sea* (Hutchinsons, 10s. 6d.), tells a very unusual story very simply and realistically. It is refreshingly readable after a spate of more sophisticated and artificial narratives of not exceptionally endowed egocentrics.

Miss Ursula Orange, at one time The Poetry Society's assistant-secretary, has had a warm reception for her third successful novel, *Tom Tiddler's Ground* (Michael Joseph, 8s.), a gay, slick comedy of English town and village life in war-time, deftly flippant yet penetrating beneath the superficial and not merely smart and crazy. Miss Orange takes her place beside E. M. Delafield and Angela Thirkell.

John Waller has made public *The Confessions of Peter Pan* (175 Banbury Road, Oxford, 1s.) written for an Oxford farewell party in May. He is characteristically nostalgic

" With regret for others
Who share my youth yet cannot discover their voyage.
As they mingle with the doomed I fear their destiny
Of loss or shipwreck, their gradually growing old
In the stale jobs. O better for them to die than surrender
That fair hope of Auden, to-morrow, to-morrow for the young!"

but concludes with the exhortation :

" Do not escape to an island
Or lose yourself comfortably in routine. Live
As for love : carry the thunder of raging youth
Hopeful to new building."

We regret that an omnibus review by Mr. Waller, now in the R.A.S.C., has not reached us in time for publication in this issue.

## DESOLATION

Through the empty corridors of my mind
An echo reverberates relentlessly.

Some can shut off the mind into small compartments,
As an underwater vessel can,
Locking out this flood and that.
What a God-like power.
Surely such men can reach the very summit of tranquillity
And they can walk for ever in the soft sunlight of a summer's eve
Marking the homeward flight of birds and the wind in the grass.

What have they, these minds, that I have not ?
Are they in tune with God
Or is there aught lacking in their soul ?
I cannot tell.

But through the empty corridors of my mind
An echo reverberates relentlessly.

P. E. Leaver.

*THE POETS' FELLOWSHIP :*

## THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

A high standard has been maintained by competitors, and the Premium Editor has been compelled once more to divide the premium into four. There has never yet been an occasion on which so few have failed to attain a distinction worthy at least of commendation.

All our winners are familiar to readers of THE POETRY REVIEW. ROBERTA SHUTTLEWORTH (Guildford) W. SKENE LAWRENCE, (Birmingham) and N. K. CRUICKSHANK (Stoke-by-Clare), contribute lyrics, while DOROTHY TRAIL (Vancouver, B.C.) and WALTER BURTON (Burton-on-Trent) have written longer poems. Walter Burton's *Queen of Orkney* attains the dimensions of a short epic, written in an accomplished and flaring style a little reminiscent of William Morris, and must be *hors concours*. Roberta Shuttleworth is already known for the variety and thoughtfulness of her work, and this time she makes a successful experiment in free verse.

Of those "Highly Commended" especial mention must be made of T. E. CASSON, ELLODÉ COLLINS, I. SUTHERLAND GROOM, "J.E.M.," and IËRNE ORMSBY.

### HIGHLY COMMENDED

Rachel E. Boulton, Winscombe ;
T. E. Casson, Ulverston ;
E. B. W. Chappelow, Egham ;
Ellodë Collins, Bournemouth ;
Eileen Dix, Buckfastleigh ;
Marguerite Edgelow, Aylesford ;
Reginald C. Eva, Harrow ;
Evelyn M. Finn, Honiton ;
I. Sutherland Groom, Sedbergh ;
W. Skene Lawrence, London, W. ;
P. E. Leaver, Kelvedon ;
Redcliffe McKie, Brighton ;
J.E.M., Pangbourne ;
Iërne Ormsby, Thurgoland ;
Cynthia Palmer, York ;
Edith Franklin Parker, Swindon ;
E. Curt Peters, Evesham ;
Morwyth Rees, Tenby ;
Chloris Heaton Ross, Chesham ;
Kathleen M. Shawcross, Rivington.

### COMMENDED

Vere Arnot, Walton-on-Thames ;
Elizabeth Barrett, Thame ;
D. R. W. Carr, Ferryhill ;
Dorothy Rosetta Colls, Chorley Wood ;
Alice E. Collinge, Bolton ;
A. H. Cordwell, Worthing ;
W. Help, Wellington ;
Peter Higham, London, W. ;
Marguerite Gibson, Miami, U.S.A. ;
J. W. G. Heaven, Ealing ;
Gladys Hunkin, St. Ives, Cornwall ;
F. Jennings, Porlock ;
Lucy Lanchester, Beaconsfield ;
Irene H. Lewis, Bedford ;
Mary Stella Ling, West Hoathly ;
A.M., Cheltenham ;
Kathleen Rocker Mason, Walsall ;
Mary Mair, Epsom ;
Enid Norman, Weston-s.-Mare ;
G. S. Oddy, Ryde ;
T. Pittaway, Frome ;
Charles E. Rice, Rotherham ;
Harry Sefton, Lytham ;
Brenda F. Skene, Lustleigh ;
Frederick E. Slade, Harrow ;
Arthur Lynnford-Smith, Wanstead ;
Mairi Stewart, Newtonwards ;
Muriel Symmons, Salcombe ;
Dinah G. Watson, Sunderland ;
Edith M. Walker, Bournemouth ;
Charles Woodhouse, Haslemere.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge, six months after despatch, the receipt "with best wishes for a happier, more poetical New Year," from our friend and contributor, Prof. J. Aquilina, LL.D., Ph. D., of a copy of his lecture on "The Maltese Language," delivered at the British Institute in Malta on October 31st last. It is inspiring as well as significant to find in the midst of Malta's terrible ordeal Prof. Aquilina calmly stating, "our claim is not that we speak pure Arabic or impure Sicilian—linguistic and racial blends are two harmless impurities that progressive nations must accept as blessings—but that we speak a language so distinct from all others, including Arabic and Italian, that we can claim to be what we are a separate nation with a language of our own. When and if our language is ever taken away from us, we shall cease to count as a people. An ancient, historical tradition of national individuality and pride, several thousands years old, would be wantonly broken for ever. But Maltese has now a splendid future indeed; it is going to revolutionize our social life and help us to achieve what Lord Lloyd advocated at the opening of this British Institute, 'that creative force, moral and intellectual, by which alone a nation may be said to live'," a bold, assured answer to Hitlerism. By-the-way, Sir Malcolm Robertson, a distinguished Vice-President of The Poetry Society, has succeeded Lord Lloyd as Chairman of The British Council, which is responsible for the valuable British Institutes.

At the annual meeting of The Poetry Society (Incorporated) on May 7th, the annual financial statement and balance sheet were considered to be more than satisfactory in the circumstances and were adopted. In spite of a falling-off of membership and the difficulties caused by the suspension of Centre activities and the dispersal of London members, subscriptions had been brought up to the pre-war level by the numerous additional and supplementary subscriptions received from devoted members. Receipts from verse-speaking examinations had fallen heavily, partly offset by reduced expenditure on their account. By reduced expenditure in other directions, notably in salaries, and a substantial sum refunded from income tax paid on the interest from the Society's investments, the debit balance had been reduced to £38. The uncertainty of the present outlook required continued economy and continued effort to maintain if not to increase subscriptions. Members were appealed to to help in the latter effort and to join in extending knowledge and interest in THE POETRY REVIEW, which had increased in effectiveness and prestige although advertising revenue continued to fall.

The hon. auditors, Messrs. Godwin and Taylor, C.A., were thanked for their services and re-elected. As a wartime measure, the retiring members of the General Council were re-elected without alteration or addition, and Centre representatives on the Council were continued in office.

Cordial votes of thanks were accorded the President, Chairman,

the retiring Council and Centre Presidents and officials, on whom the realization and implementing of the basic idea of the Society depended, with added thanks to the New Verse Editor whose long continued assiduously maintained services were greatly admired and appreciated.

We deeply regret to have to record the death on June 12th, of Mr. Charles Oscar Gridley, J.P., in his ninetieth year. For above a quarter of a century Mr. Gridley was the hon. treasurer of The Poetry Society, the wise and conscientious custodian of the Society's funds and guarantor of its financial stability and probity. As a gesture of gratification at the Society being able to seek incorporation, after having indemnified successive presidents against liability without having been called on to implement that guarantee, Mr. Gridley paid the legal and other charges involved. For many years he, with the complete confidence of the President for the time being, acted as Chairman of Council with rare wisdom and steadfastness, relinquishing office only last year, long after he had withdrawn from other organizations, on the breakdown of his up till then vigorous physical and mental health under the strain of the war which had affected him severely. He was the active embodiment of the Society,—a life-long lover and reader of poetry with profound faith in its significance and value, particularly with respect to its uses in education and its influence on youth,—a faith expressed in the Manifesto he was responsible for having issued above the signatures of representative distinguished members in 1911, under the presidency of Lord Coleridge,—a declaration of faith and works that remains operative and is being given extensive effect to.

Mr. Gridley had an early and wide acquaintance with Elizabethan poets and dramatists. Of his own time he was deeply influenced by Francis Thompson's mystic lyricalism and by the vitality and realism of Kipling, but his deepest attachment was to Walt Whitman, whose genius he was among the first to recognize. In the fervour of his admiration Mr. Gridley crossed the Atlantic in the 'eighties to see Whitman with whom he kept up a correspondence for many years. One of Whitman's characteristic postcards, now in the archives of The Poetry Society, reads:

328 Mickle Street, Camden New Jersey, U.S.A., August 30th, '86: Thanks for "Notes on America," safely received and read with interest by me. I consider your Carlyle to be as much a Democrat as anybody—more than a good many accepted ones. I am much the same as when you saw me last—pulled a little lower down perhaps, good bodily health enough, but a prisoner to chair and house. WALT WHITMAN.

This is not the place to record Mr. Gridley's many other interests and public activities. He was a most unostentatious humanitarian, shrinking from recognition and praise for the social and other work he carried on in Bermondsey and elsewhere in founding boys clubs and holiday camps, among the first of their kind, and in other directions. He was treasurer of the local Lifeboat Fund and other philanthrophic

organizations, and for 68 years—a record—was a member of the Honourable Artillery Company. His varied literary interests were deep rooted in the Victorian Age. A close friend of Theodore Watts, better known later as Watts Dunton, and associated with the later pre-Raphelites, he was a contributor to the *Athenaeum*, the founder of the Carlyle Society and the editor and compiler of its transactions. In his deep devotion to the memory of Carlyle, Mr. Gridley was instrumental in saving and preserving the Sage's house in Cheyne Walk. He published several volumes of simple, sincere verse, chiefly expressive of his perpetual delight in field flowers, from the re-appearance of the first celandine, foretelling the approach of spring, to the gathering of the last white campion blooming among the autumn stubble. He knew and loved them all,—to him the meanest flower that breathed was more wonderful and precious than gold. His birthdays and his friends were commemorated in sonnets; he has left many MS. volumes of these records and memories and quiet thoughts, with notes on his field and garden flower friends, their significance and mystery. This great and simple gentleman, who walked in the path of gentleness, and in his absolute integrity was impervious to anything mean or base,—he spoke no slander, no, nor listened to it,—ended his earthly questings in Putney Vale cemetery on June 18th, the 18th anniversary of the incorporation of The Poetry Society.

FRAGMENT: A MEMORY OF ENID WINDSOR MARK (Mrs. Barry).

To remember Enid Windsor Mark is to remember someone with a pressing urgency for creation in poetry and drama, and a constant ambition for the just recognition of her work. To remember her life, her poetry and her plays is to contemplate fragments of a promise broken by death before the thirties.

Enid Mark had an independent spirit: she had the Celtic love of freedom, and although she periodically returned to her people's home in Wales, from the time she became a qualified domestic science teacher to the time of her marriage she lived her own life with an emphatic independence which had loneliness as its price. Her teaching ability was hereditary, but it was her writing which was the core of herself. Many readers of THE POETRY REVIEW will remember her as a vital member of The Poetry Society: she joined the "1900 Group" as soon as it was formed, and persistently worked for its continuance in wartime. She was also an acting member of amateur dramatic societies, and her last play was a success when produced by the Unity Theatre.

War came quickly after her marriage, and broke up her married life: her husband was evacuated to Cambridge with his school, and she became an ambulance driver in London. She took part in her unit's pantomime that Christmas, composings songs for it; and disappeared from action. Tuberculosis ended the fragment of her versatile life early this year.

The literary work of Enid Windsor Mark may be divided into two distinct parts, expressive of the dominant features of her personality : the work (mostly poems) which indicates her Celtic melancholy, super-sensitiveness and the inherent music in her race, and that (mostly prose plays) which shouts aloud in hard strength against social and economic inequality and the ugliness in life compared to the writer's vision. She wrote several one act plays which should be produced : her realism is convincing, her characters alive and her stagecraft more that of the professional than the amateur. Her prose is active and her themes are concerned with people in dramatic struggles against society and life. She had already begun to find a theatre audience, having had two or three plays produced by dramatic societies before her work attracted the attention of the Unity Theatre.

Enid Mark's poems in The Poetry Review are some of her best. In them she has combined feeling and strength as she did not always succeed in doing in her poetry. It is interesting to note that they are largely concerned with horror as their theme. In *The Coward* she cries :

> . . . " I fear life which is a chrystal globe
> of radiant colours gilding all with light,
> yet chrystal-fashioned, made of treacherous glass
> held between shivering fingers, dropt at last,
> broken and trodden down beyond recall . . ."

Her last poem in The Poetry Review is called " A Private Hell " and is the record of another's fear. " Fragment " perhaps, best expresses her feeling for modern life, her travail, her loneliness, and her vivid sense of " all gaiety of spring in artist colours—her understanding of resurrection.

> " Tread softly in the midst of pain,
> New age is seeking birth.
> As brown earth trembles in its travail pangs,
> Suffers alone, unheeded by the throngs of men
> Then bursting forth with vivid life, reveals
> Its new-born flowers, the Pussy willow leaves,
> All gaiety of spring in artist colours,
> So we are born again. . . ."

C. B. T.

Joseph Philip Simcox, the writer of *Farming in Alta*, in 1900 was a student of agriculture and forestry under the guidance of Mr. Percival, a settler in British Columbia. In 1903—after a holiday in England, he, on the advice of his father, accepted a " claim "—in Alberta, and one of many offered to pioneer settlers by Government. Equipped with essentials, such as a cart, tent, team of horses, plough and tools, he finds his way to the " claim " in May 1904. The sunshine, melting the snow, *revives* the flies. Consequently, he must first make a shelter for the horses, who, maddened by the flies, would break from tether and escape. By slow degrees, and with constant toil, Joseph-Philip

receives sufficient wood to construct his first hut. This wood has been floated by river from trees felled in British Columbia. Before winter sets in he has solid shelter for his horses, cows, and a co-settler and a chimney for their stove. Together these chums wrestle against the resentment and caprice of the lovely wide prairie lands. Nature herself appears to fret under the yoke of cultivation even while she smiles approval. The routine of toil brings evidence of her obstructive whim. The prairie fires, ruined crops, abnormal weather, seem so many gestures of her disapproval. Yet, she yields, smiling and frowning by turns upon the settler. From 1916 till the Armistice Mr. Simcox was with the Edmonton Rifles and served in France.

Mr. Louis Lawler is a trooper now serving in a famous Yeomanry Regiment in the Middle East. He is 22 years old and joined the Territorial Army some time before the outbreak of war. Several of his poems have been published in the *Palestine Gazette* in recent months.

The usual premium offer for the best poem or poems submitted to the Premium Editor during the month (without limitation to subject) is continued. Not more than four lyrics or one long poem should be submitted. MSS. should reach "The Premium Editor, THE POETRY REVIEW, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," by August 1st, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope, and if criticism is desired, 2s. 6d. (For a more detailed criticism, 5s. should be sent.) It is essential that entrants to this competition be members of The Poetry Sociesy or registered subscribers to THE POETRY REVIEW, and that each poem bears the name and address of the auther.

MRS. KENNETH GRAHAME: As I said in sending my subscription last year, as a vice-president of the Society, that I would in the circumstances occasioned through war conditions double it, I am enclosing cheque for two guineas together with my best wishes for the continued activities of The Poetry Society. The programme you sent should prove a powerful antidote to the black ins and black outs of the present troublous times, and it is a great thing that Poetry should keep its flag flying, as it evidently does.

Interest in beauty, whether of art, music or literature, is more than ever needed to counteract the hideous plight which the world has now come to; therefore my best wishes for the endeavours of The Poetry Society to preserve a place as near the "front" as may be in a world chiefly occupied in flying sky high or delving under the earth.

G. A. PALMER, Regina, Sask., Canada: Your determination *to carry on* is consistent with the general British policy and is a pattern for the whole of the Commonwealths, not excluding the U.S., Canada's very good neighbour.

# A POET AND WAR

## I

BEFORE the war, a poetic revolt was long overdue. It should have taken place five years ago, but was postponed—until to-day.

The past poetic generation has been one of despair, one that reflected man's agony of mind as he gazed into a future too terrible to be met, too certain to be evaded, too close to be prevented. There were three main human emotional reactions : fear, despair, and a desire to escape. These are not the mainsprings of great poetry.

However, a great poet is a great poet in any age. But for his song to ring truest he must live in an age that lets him sing, that wants him to sing, or, at all events, does not drown his song.

In the case of most of the pre-war poets, their epoch overpowered them ; they were prophets of light surrounded by darkness. Nothing was sacred. All was travelling to chaos. Few could move their eyes off the impending disaster, to look beyond, or even to look aside. Poetry, written by poets gazing on death, never came to life.

It is not the poet's job to forecast physical disaster, empirical upheaval : he must see above and beyond these things. Cecil Day Lewis, certainly one of the few real poets that the period-between-wars produced, explains the absence of war poets :

> It is the logic of our times,
> No subject for immortal verse,
> That we who lived by honest dreams,
> Defend the bad against the worse.

But what has a poet to do with the logic of our times anyway ?

What has logic to do with truth ? The truth that Byron glimpsed, that Shelley re-created, that Shakespeare knew—is that the truth of the logician ?

The poet does not deal in science, or psychology, or mass-observation. His is the song of the ultimate truth, the intensely personal song of universal application.

And, above all, he sings. As the thrush in the dew of

the morning, and the nightingale in the mists of the evening, the poet sings, and cannot help but go on singing.

II

There has recently been a cry that this war lacked its quota of war-poets. Each strategic withdrawal, each naval encounter, each bomb dropping on Stepney marshes, each deed that wins the George Medal, these, the newspapers and the worst kind of literary magazine tell us, are all opportunities for the modern bard to get busy and rehash the glories of our times in verse.

But the public just doesn't want it. And who can blame it? At last it has seen through the pseudo-patriotic trash with which it has in previous wars been hastened on to death and damnation. If this is really the poet's job in war, this wording of metrical imperialistic posters, then I think we can do well without war-poets.

But the real poet, in war, offers a vast contribution to humanity. The few war poets of the Four Years' War have left us a great treasure that I should like to think would be equalled by the poets living history to-day. Owen, Rosenberg, Read, Brooke, Sassoon : not a very long list. But there were others who wrote simply, feelingly, fearfully, but not jingoistically, from the trenches thinking on the English scene. And Masefield, Thomas, de la Mare, Eliot, Hardy were all writing good poetry. But their genius was not born in chaos, moulded in the furnace ; theirs was not war poetry, nurtured on the flames of misery and suffering, conflict and cowardice. But a sorry show withal, and all the more sorry when you consider that the poets who have emerged the mastersingers of the conflict were not at the time those to whom the people listened. Only Brooke. And he had the Byronic touch.

There are still many willing to write poetry on the Rightness of a Briton and the Wrongness of a Hun. The difference is there are not many people to read it. They ask more of the poets nowadays.

The true poets of this war are those whose work is born of the suffering and terror of humanity to-day, and the

beauty and hope for humanity to-morrow. In such poets, the true poets, this decade will not be lacking. They are, and will be, more plentiful than their predecessors of 1914. Indeed, their song sounds now over the dream-rim of the far horizon.

We have just lived through an age of poetic experiment and innovation ; only now shall we see its fruition. The poets' songs have been drowned in the waters of despair and desolation ; but now hope breaks the way and courage restores our faith. The poet will sing, and pray to God that this time his song is heeded.

> Not thus, not thus are the wild souls of men.
> No peace for those
> Who step beyond the blindness of the pen
> To where the skies unclose.
> For them the spitting mob, the cross, the crown of thorns,
> The bull gone mad, the saviour on his horns.

PETER BAKER.

Peter Baker, who was born in 1921, was about to enter Trinity College, Cambridge, when war broke out. Instead, he joined the Royal Artillery. After eight months in the ranks he went to Catterick O.C.T.U., whence came first collection of poems, *The Beggar's Lute* (Resurgam Broadsheets : Favil Press, 1s.). Now a gunner subaltern. Joint editor of a war-time anthology for publication in the autumn and author of a war-novel coming out at the end of the year, and now joint editor, with Patricia Ledward, of the Resurgam broadsheets.

## LOOK AND LISTEN

I LOOKED and all the trees were bare
I looked again the leaves were there
I looked and all the trees were green
I looked again no leaves were seen.

I listened, roar of gun, and plane
Proclaimed that war had come again
But listen till such sounds shall cease
And we may hear the Hymn of Peace.

ELSPETH GRAHAME.

## THE MOUNTAINEERS

THEY scaled the summit,
Died at achievement's grasp,
Cold-quelled and blizzard-conquered.
Up the jagged path they stumbled,
Flesh-scarred, wind-bitten,
Snow-covered, frozen-fingered ;
Not for word-honour, glory,
Not for mouthed praise of men,
But for the heart's approval,
To prove the will, of the too shrinking flesh,
Indomitable master ;
Daring disaster to assert man's mind
Greater in power than hostile circumstance.
Their dower a pall of falling flakes, no more ;
Lusting for breath, breath death-denied,
They died,
Surrendering in that last, lost, lonely place,
To the gaunt summoner we all must know ;
But better so, O better, better so,
Than the death-racked, clutching fingers
In an old man's bed.

W. R. LATHAM.

## LAMENT

FOR P.N.

HERE are graves but newly made
Where two villagers are laid.
Two still forms, the young and old
Does our Mother Earth enfold.
One was tired and full of years—
For the maiden shed your tears,
She was fair, with life before her,
From her lover's arms death bore her
To this lonely, earthy bed,
Round about it lightly tread.
Bird, O bird in yonder tree
Sing for her a threnody.

Towersey, Oxon. ELIZABETH BARRETT.

## THE GIANT-KILLERS

TWO met and clung together on the threshold of that
place
By them called : " Home," for a brief hour of leave.
The heavy metal helmet and the rifle
And bulging knapsack, sprawled about their feet,
Called : " Time ! " He sighed and drew her close.
The knapsack murmured :
" Our weight is heavy, heavy like your heart's,
Yet add us to your load, it will weigh less,—
Winged as we are . . . winged as we are ! "

She caught their sense. " They stand for all ! " she cried.
" Those golden Bees that gather up the honey
From the small wild-flowers of every-day
To store it in our hives of memory,
*They* know ! And the far-soaring Birds
That sang upon the mountains at the dawn
Of the World's First Day,—the first for us—when we were
born
Into a knowledge of Eternity and glimpsed
The Now-Forever Life behind earth's veil,
These that sang with us,
Sang also for us and are singing yet—
*They know !* "

He swung the heavy knapsack into place and tapped it,
nodding.
" Yes, all of life is here, the essential harvest,
Stored in this bundle, all that signifies
Being, Becoming, Having. . . . They are here,
Who hoed earth's weedy path for us and fought
The thistles, while we heedless, grasped
At gilded straws and brief, unfruitful poppies.
And you, my Love, are here, with all that flowers
Sacredly out of the quiet and the dark
From the primeval ' AM.' Whence Beauty came,
From that Divine Distillery came you,
White-petalled Truth and Goodness pollen-scented,
In dearest human form. Oh, where's the word

Can magnify plain ' Thanks ' a thousand times
And then, ten thousand ! Not all the songs of the world
Could voice my praise for the loved gift of you
Better than these harsh implements of war."

She raised the rifle. " Neighbours deem us cold
That parting, and perchance the final act
Which drops the curtain on this earthly scene,
Dismays us not, but finds us even heartened
To face War singing, like that far Queen of Britain
Whose very battle-axe shouted defiance.
This is your song of thankfulness, my Love,
This rifle primed with silver bullets, cast
From our hearts' blood, of which each aching drop
Hardens in cooling to a steadfast purpose :—
The end of Tyranny. For this we take
The Sword of the Spirit, challenging those dark Powers
That haunt the minds of God-forsaking men
And drive them to abortion of the Soul.
From ancient, muddy Eryops man climbed,
A Jack-of-all-Trades, on a dizzy Beanstalk,
Giant-pursued. A thousand forms of life
Spawned on that tree and passed, but still he struggled,
Sensing a Land of Promise where the Spirit
Might shed its trammels, wake to ultimate freedom,
And know the Giant harmless as the shadows
On a May-morning."

" True, my Beloved," he said,
" But now the Monster threatens and your Jack
Must fight upon his Beanstalk once again.
Stark is this War, for Hydra-headed Evil
Stalks like the Prince of Darkness in the guise
Of Priest and Leader, promising his dupes
The Leaves of the Tree for Healing and new Life
To those who drink his poison-tainted words.
Poor Fools ! He hews upon the deepest roots
Of that same Tree by which they rose to Freedom
Out of the clay's abyss, and now they hearken

With ear bemused, to logic all awry
That turns their blood to acid and their hearts
To hardest iron. Well, they choose it so
And needs must wallow in their bath of blood
Until the iron melt. What bitter tears
Mankind must shed and what down-bearing burdens
Will pile upon men's shoulders, who can say?
But we, who dare this Giant, seize the Banner
Passed on by countless Knights of Liberty
From hand to hand, down the long-storied years
And wave it, shouting : ' God with us, and Freedom ! '
And you who stand unarmed to face the onslaught,
Dreading the terror, yet with grace to meet it,
You all are kin to Jack the Giant-Killer,
And will go down in history with him,
As common folk joined in a common cause.
But see, the impatient minutes
Rush to their hour before they have set out,
And ' Farewell ' parts us almost as we meet !
My helmet, please."

" This is your shield," she said.
" Its sombre metal shines like living light
Round your beloved head, as though a nimbus
Rayed from the clouds. This shield of Righteousness,
Oh, may it guard and keep you ! Yet, if now,
If even now, Death were to sound his Trumpet
Summoning one of us to march straight on
Beyond recall for even an hour's leave,
Shall either niggardly repine or fill
The lonely void with vain, unthankful tears ?
I will not so reproach the Eternal Giver ! "

" Nor I, for we who climb that Heavenward Tree
Know that your Birds of Dawn are singing still,—
And have we not those Hives of wild-flower Honey
Stored by the Golden Bees against such time ?
We hold immortal riches ! Love, farewell ! "

They kissed and parted, and no future hour
Linked them again on earth. That place called : 'Home'
Crashed to a heap of rubble and their poor bodies
Drift now as dust about the indifferent world.
They left no outward mark, being but juniors
In the great school of the State, yet Poets, Lovers,
And those whose dedicated feet are set
To climb the Heavenly Beanstalk, hear their message
And join the Giant-Killers unafraid.

Birmingham. W. SKENE LAURENCE.

## IMMORTAL

WEEP no more upon his lonely grave
Nor walk your darkened way uncomforted.
How could that swift release make him death's slave?
He is not there, he whom you call the Dead.
Freed from the world, now soul to soul, he yearns
For that immortal touch the flesh denied.
O yield him understanding that discerns—
Reach out! Transcend that hour in which he died.

Fling wide the door into the garden where
He loved to walk with bird and tree and flower.
O fill his room with roses. Smile and share
His old-time joy in that his mortal hour.
Then, deep in Silence, KNOW his presence there,
Not dead, but freed forever from death's power.

EVELYN COUCHMAN.

## FAREWELL

RED sky of hope for the unborn to-morrow,
Glow on the snow enshrouding dead to-day;
This day whose silver silence I must borrow
So that no word of mine may dim your way,
For it is now, my love, that you must go—
Though all the tears my frozen heart denies—
Should fall in white flakes from the burdened skies
And cover up your footsteps through the snow.

L. M. MILLER.

# ANOTHER WHO LIVES ON

*"Selected Poems" by Stephen Spender. Sesame Edition. Faber, 2s. 6d.*
*"The Burning Cactus" by Stephen Spender. Faber Reprint. 3s. 6d. net.*

STEPHEN SPENDER is by now well established as a leader of the intellectuals. He is a founder of *Horizon*, first among war-time magazines; he is the most well-known of the post-Eliot generations to have remained in England since the beginning of the war; he has in this time published *September Journal*, a successful novel and numerous poems; he has probably displaced Auden as Oxford's favourite poet; he has got married again—I hope happily—has become widely regarded as a war poet, and is the subject of a legend. As Peter Howard would have said if Peter Howard were still writing political articles and if Spender were a politician: "At the moment he is strong, very strong." Let us examine where this strength lies.

Spender's strength is, I suppose, almost a paradox, for it is founded upon weakness. Spender became quickly famous by capitalizing the weakness of his own character; for it was this weakness coupled to poetry that gave his writing power, though it was the power of beauty rather than the power of effectiveness. That he is now leaving this behind him is shown by the selection in his Sesame edition. *Poems* was a finer book than *The Still Centre*, yet has less space in this selection; and those poems which showed personal weakness most—those to T.A.R.H. or "I think continually of those who were truly great" or "as beautiful and soft as any moth"—an endeavour to blur the sharp lines of aeroplanes—are omitted. These were among my favourite poems so I noticed their absence. Spender has never been as strong as Auden who is so strong that he can carry all before him, he faithless with ease and without care, regard the world almost with cynical detachment, at times with fun; but Spender will weep at these things and regard them with an always sorrowing eye. Auden is strong enough to disregard the present war entirely, to live in America; but Spender knows that he has to remain, as all the weak have to remain, in order that they may become stronger and surer of themselves. One admires Auden the more as representing an individuality

to which one cannot at the moment attain, but one sympathizes with Spender. Auden is proud, firm, and Byronic; Spender is a mixture of Shelley and Keats. Both are doing the correct thing. Spender might say to Auden:

> Holy is lucidity _____
> And the mind that dare explain,

for it is lucidity and daring that Auden has and which Spender will try to carve out of his weakness. How significant of this is Spender's early work! He says:

> Oh comrades, step beautifully from the solid wall
> advance to rebuild and sleep with friend on hill
> advance to rebel and remember what you have
> no ghost ever had, immured in his hall.

Yet it is only a fine lyricism after all, no key to life or way out of the morass. When it comes down to facts we are faced with:

> What I had not foreseen
> Was the gradual day
> Weakening the will
> Taking the brightness away.

And *The Burning Cactus*, a collection of Spender's early prose tales, is in the same way made up of mysterious stories of people who were unhappy in their loves or who could never find their true and most magic homes. These lovers have in mind an ideal love which the loved ones do not understand or to which they are unable to respond. Richard cannot make himself clear to Donauld in "By the Lake"; the boy in "The Dead Island" is lapped in a darkness he may neither express nor escape; Till, one of those faithless who cannot be content because their appropriate darling is never to be found, forces himself at last to recognize that life is over. "In any case I have nearly lost the charm that made so many people love me. You can't deceive me about that, however hard you try." It is the playboy's end, the end of a Peter Pan, the end of a life that was itself too fine and so could not be perfect—all the horror of having to grow up. At such a period one is driven to love others who seem to one heroic because younger still;

and one preaches a philosophy of gentleness which has as its aim the spread of awareness, an endeavour to bring this other mind onto the same platform as one's own. And if this fails one will say as Werner says to Tom :

" So you would fight and be killed, and whatever you did, one would love you : yes, I for my part would go on loving you to the end of my life, whatever happened. . . . "

I do not know how near this is to the Spender legend, yet Spender has written :

> But another who lives on
> Wears within his heart for ever
> The space split open by the bullet,
> All under the olive trees.

And this being over, the new Spender, who is stronger—who has left weakness behind him, is more elusive about himself, has more to say about that world which he will perhaps help. It is almost as if he has said to himself :

> You were a child again
> Who sees for the first time things happen.

In *Trial of a Judge* his identity is concealed often in that of his characters. He is Petra's brother :

> Their leaden bullets against a knife edge
> Of steel, have tried to turn the blade :
> But instantly when he died, the entire knife
> Of what he thought and strove, glued to my hand.

And this is perhaps the explanation of that play, just as the poem " The Room above the Square " with its clue " sunbright peninsulas of the sword " remembers the old times when to be weak was wonderful and to be strong was silly. But these times are over now and it is the world that Spender is reflecting upon ; and the sadness that is in his poetry is for other people, for a boy who died in Spain (" He was a better target for a kiss "), for the Spanish people, for all who are " ridden by their speed," for Napoleon even, to-day for men lost at sea or killed in battles, for the whole generation of the lost and doomed. Rarely now is he the poet of a weakness that was once a comfort to the weakness of others ; he has been away over far hills and will not return ; from a private poet he may become a major poet—even though it involves :

The necessity of being alone
And the never being alone
Away from the lighted cities of the brain;
To touch and kiss
The gold horizon of the withheld wish.

There are the two Spenders in the speech of Petra's fiancé in *Trial of a Judge*. One says:

When Petra slept with me
I held the whole of life, but now that earth
With all its trees and lakes has turned away its side
And I am left in a cold space.

But the other replies:

All we need is love. And yet we play
The meaningless game of a machine
Running in grooves laid down by death.

She concludes:

Go home and let me cry.

But there is no need to take this last line as a confession of further weakness. For out of tears has come strength, from sorrow a stronger feeling for humanity, from bitterness lucidity. It is for Till and Richard and Werner to weep now. They are with Spender at last only in so far as they are among the living. "The dead are heaped together. But the living are alone. They are continually being forced to alter their lives."

JOHN WALLER.

[The above article was posted while Lieut. Waller was on his way to "the other end of the world." . . . It should have included, as an appendix, a review of the new volumes by Mr. Binyon and Lord Dunsany which may be on its way now. The war affects the appearance of reviews as well as of books and periodicals. But belated appearance is not only excuseable; it is an achievement. And something of a distinction too to have poetry criticism done on and dispatched from a troopship.

Mr. Waller feels under an obligation to reply to criticism in recent "Letters to the Editor," but these replies, which will acquire a calm detachment and aloofness in the circumstances, are delayed owing to the post now taking six weeks or more either way. The due appearance of Mr. Waller's Oxford Magazine, *Kingdom Come*, is not interfered with by his absence.—ED.]

## ISAIAH IN CLOWN'S DRESS

(*Lines written at the end of* 1938 *concerning some foolish and malicious critics and reviewers and boycotting whisperers.*)

NOW aid me well, true writing-men! I'm muffled up
in shawls—
Defence from critics' balderdash, a rain of offal-balls;
For when we're bad we're rather good—and good, we're
bad or vile,
I'm bruised to death by a strange review whose views were
bruised with guile.

We've moths and bugs and blanket thugs and fleas upon our
beds,
With cricket-prigs and greener grigs, the sons of nettle-
heads.
Yet what see I upon the sky, and read upon the wall?
"Black Hitler comes with shells and drums, and he will
get them all."

He got the props, he got the stops, he got the checks, the
sky,
He got the Jews, he got the Blues, he put the Reds in pie.
He got the large and useful things, so he will get the small;
For he was made to swing a blade and write upon a wall.

Now I would save them if I could, and turn them from their
guile,
By kick or curse or reprimand, or soft forgiving smile;
For wish not I now tears are dry and wrath is in its stall
That Satan comes with shells and drums to mortify them
all.

Ah! news so glad if they were sad of each deluding vice,
And, hit by no man, changed from bad, to butterflies from
lice;
Though I did wish to bash their heads and eat them with a
spoon,
"Cheer up! Cheer up!" sobs cloudy sky. "Sigh down!"
moans mumble moon,

" For the Devil comes,
And Goering strums,—
And that will change them all ;
Or God will bring their fall."

HERBERT PALMER.

## THANK GOD FOR CHANGELESS THINGS

THANK God for changeless things
When Man's frail glories die ;
The shadows of the screaming wings
Grow small against the time-laved sky.

Thank God for changeless things,
The things that cannot die :
The rhythmic dawn, the hope it brings,
And you and I, beloved, you and I.

Chesham. CHLORIS HEATON ROSS.

## THE HERON

ILL-OMEN winged over the city,
Winged and poised,
Brooded among the smoke—oh were we doomed?—
He had not noised
Like the crowd
Of empty-headed rooks—
Too proud
Was he ; he hovered among the smokes,
Silent, unknown,
Alone !

With a fine dashing of wings,
He wheeled suddenly southward to rivers,
Feeling the thrill of undiscovered things—
In excited quivers
He flew, in and out of winged light—
Then out, out of sight.

Newstead Abbey. MARGERY SMITH.

## WIDOW BY THE VISTULA

THE sweetest moment is still, is now,
The waves of time are rocking in one;
In the golden pool of Saint Martin's summer
Lies the remembrance of fiery sun,
Lives the cry of the lightning stallion,
His turning eye and tossing mane,
The old plaint of the young ploughman,
The curl of the earth beneath the plough.

Now turns the tide to the moon above,
The seasons turn, and large is love.
Gather ye faith from this perfect thing
For the sorrow of winter
And travail of Spring.
So sang I in Saint Martin's summer.

But the marriage chest will give no more
The smell of sweet herbs at festival,
From heavy yards of dancing skirts,
And silks and shining beads and coral.

Never again across the grass
Will I go like a flower
To Mass.

Never again the earth receive
Seed flung from the master's hand,
Nor young corn bend its trembling head
Strand upon strand,
Nor the green shoots of Spring achieve
The dignity of winter's bread.

His field will be barren ever,
And weeds run over the unloved ground;
Never again will my beauty flower,
Nor my heart beat with the unborn sound
Of children's cries,
Or when a bird sings

In early skies
Swept with angels' wings.

For the four winds of heaven
Are turned to gusts of tears,
And earth's beauties hidden
In a yellow mist of fears,
Where murder has been foully done.
The field and I will bear no other harvest.
The master of the plough, and mine, has gone.

GERALDINE FITZGIBBON.

## MARIAGE DE CONVENANCE, 1941

NIGHT now is wed with Death. That dew-eyed Night
Once had so many lovers—with her suite
Of starry handmaids and her far-flung hair
Braided with cloud-wrack ; on her velvet stair
The Lords of Earth and Heaven set amorous feet—
Love that desired her, Sleep that once possessed her,
Folly and Frolic that had oft caressed her,
Murder that dared to plead a lenient hour
And Grief, fond fool of her indulgent bower.
So easy was her wont to court and greet.
But this same Night, divine, deep-bosomed Night,
In bridal-bond now spurns each late delight.

Death, her old lover, came in a new guise.
With painted wings he came, implacable ;
With voice persistent, pulsing, pitiless,
Proffering her woof of fire for wedding-dress.
She was so free and he so purposeful.
Shrank all the gay stars, dared no moon befriending.
Demons with flaring eyes for maids attending,
Crashing of roof and raft for serenade—
With smoking wreck the velvet stair is laid.
Were ever vows exchanged less tolerable,
Did ever bride from nuptial couch arise
To rain such tears from—ah, such altered eyes !

MARGUERITE JOHANSEN.

## WE, BY WINDOWS WATCHING

(America, 1941)

ALL is not well with Winter;
Orion hurries home;
To winds that flee new anguish
Shrills out the anchored limb;

The frost is not so silver
As on a calmer day;
The nervous heart pounds almost
Too loud for poetry.

Till we, by windows watching,
Sense sickness in the year,
Who drank a dreamy weather
Oblivious of war.

And since one ocean cannot
Cool madness of the sun,
A fever fierce as lava
Creeps from the east again,

Creeps to the west and, burning,
Lies upon brow and lip
And wakens us to iron
Out of a golden sleep.

James E. Warren, Jr.

Atlanta, Ga.,

## DEATH-HISTORY

ALWAYS it swung him with magnetic force,
That mystery beyond the edge of Time;
Long before any loss had shadowed him
It tortured boyhood, baffled his young prime.

Was there a sudden wall? A conscious void?
A land? Could one be sure? He could not say.
His thought wheeled over Death, no eye in it,
Explored, directed by fear's far-sent ray.

Then he came nearer. Came, saw for himself
That darkness. Plunged his vision hard, to find
The faintest of blurred contours. Ah, Death changed,
As for the steady peering of mankind

Night's pinpoint mysteries flowered into worlds
Not wholly other nor yet quite unknown:
Built of our atoms, having heat or ice,
Nitrogen, ores, rocks, vapour, like our own.

As though he shouted back thousands of years
And spoke of stars, of our known firmament,
His words tapped on shut eyelids through deaf ears.
Anger and pity pierced him as he went

Arguing with the hand crooked on the trigger,
With the vague lifted blue reposeful stare,
With the short footsteps padding round and round
The narrow cages of this world's despair.

Though often, when all meaning weighed too heavy,
When the long choice was agony too deep,
He envied some their still-life, easy heaven,
Others their faith in a perpetual sleep.

N. K. Cruickshank.

## WAR CASUALTY

THERE is something gone, there is something broken,
That was not body nor heart nor mind,
That pulsed with the rhythm of words unspoken
And danced to a melody undefined.

Only is left a body that grumbles
At war-time sleep and war-time feeding,
Only a mind that limps and stumbles,
And a heart that is dully bleeding.

F. J. Woodward.

## APOLOGIA

*To A.M.H.*

I LOVE you and I have no word to say.
Where others hymn the splendour of their love
Pluck from the ocean of the skies above
A garland of her stars, and proudly lay
The majesty of day, the bloom of night
Impatient at the feet of love's delight
I love you, and I have no word to say.

The poet, in a mould of music planned
To enshrine the grandeur of a love untold
Pours the immortal images of old,
His jewelled dreams, and all the rich demand
Of love's imagining, and there, behold,
A palace wrought with words of graven gold.

And I am dumb ! But you will understand,
You that are all the lovelight of my day,
That I who love you have no word to say
So that I see your face, and hold your hand.

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS.

## SPRING IN THE MOUNTAINS

SO April, and all the sky is water ; ice
crashes, rattle the screes on Tryfan ; the rill,
in the gully marsh, trailing Ophelia tresses,
soaks and sluggish lies. Each hour on the hill
a lamb is born, while by wet sides
of peat and wasted heather root (pale
skeletons of mariners picked clean),
waiting his moment a fox lurks to kill.
And the clouds that pace restless over Llewelyn,
for ever racing but for ever still
like runners painted on a vase, shall hold,
their strange stationary course until,
time and the mountains melting, they from the sun
drop to the level world and freely run.

IAN L. SERRAILLIER.

## SWEET PRETENDER

WHETHER you cared or simply were
A sweet pretender;
Whether your love was strong as trees
Or drooped as wild anemones,
Fragile and slender;

Whether your words were as the hills
Or as the snow,
Your kisses lasting leaves for me
Or petals 'neath the lilac tree—
I could not know.

To me the trees and fragile flowers
Are all as one,
The fallen blossoms and the green,
The sunlit hills where snow has been—
And all are gone.

PHYLLIS LYTH.

## PROPHECY

THE light of the moon is silver,
And the light of the sun is gold,
But the Maid shall lack for shelter
And the Child shall quake for cold.
For all the hemlock that was drunk
Men will not seek the light.
For all the pain upon the Cross
They will not follow it.

And they that look for peace on earth
That peace shall never see,
And they that die for men shall die
Ten thousand years to be.

The light of the moon is silver
And the light of the sun is gold,
But the Maid shall lack for shelter
And the Child shall quake for cold.

J.E M.

# T. S. ELIOT AND THE LAY-READER

IF the question is put "For what audience does Mr. Eliot write?" The answer would be emphatically None. Any writer who has a background of such strength that he has founded a " school of poetry " is not dependent either on a public's likes or dislikes and he is therefore writing for an epoch and not a fashionable people.

The full strength of the literary world has been launched for and against T. S. Eliot. Dive-bombers, tanks, dreadnoughts of the intelligentsia have manœuvred and battled, yet it might not be wrong to say that the versatile young parachutists have carried much of the day in their support of this twentieth-century poet.

For the peers of literature this article attempts no persuasion; they either approve or disapprove; and for both attitudes there are doubtless water-tight arguments; and in any case it holds good that " to persuade a man against his will, he is of the same opinion still."

But there is a further field beyond the contentiousness of supporters or opposers, and it belongs to the growing community of the reading public. This public wants to know what Mr. Eliot has achieved and how he blew the desert sands that bared the heads of ostriches.

When contemplating the work of any poet, the first question to put is a simple one—"What has this writer achieved?" And if we do not fly off at a tangent of literary fear, the answer should be as full of simplicity as the question.

If we exclude the sun's light, which is turned into chlorophyl for food value, there would appear to be nothing wrong with the old saying, " There is nothing new!" That means that nothing new comes in from the outside, but it does not mean that there is not a vast amount of material at our feet which we neither understand nor know how to manipulate. We are constantly discovering new things, new meanings, new uses for things that have been here since the world began. In other words there is always a new interpretation for " oldnesses."

We may vary little from our ancestors, but whereas they raced a chaise from London to Brighton, we now race a

Typhoon Aeroplane. The practice of racing is still the same, but its form has evolved with the circumstances and development of man. So we have extracted the cognisance that there are " new channels for expressing known axioms and that there are always new poets who will find some jewel hitherto uncovered."

When we meet T. S. Eliot to-day, it is at the junction of " Burnt Norton " and " East Coker." The " Rock " poems and so on, back through the " Waste Land " to " Mr. Prufrock," precede us. This most happily falls into line with Eliot's natural inclination towards the contra-plex. Because he began with " Mr. Prufrock " and met us at " Burnt Norton," we establish a contrary sequence of events by travelling from " Burnt Norton " to " Mr. Prufrock."

To launch into a poet's most mature work first is not easy. It is like going in at the deep end and struggling to swim through to the shallow end ; but this is not so unwise as it would appear, since the time of exhaustion comes when there is no longer need for effort.

In " Burnt Norton " all Mr. Eliot's past work is present. His magnet is visibly seen at work, drawing each steel filing to its centralized thought.

The co-ordinate use made of garlic and sapphires (one a common vegetable, the other a precious gem) both obtained from the origin of earth, that also holds the iron ore, which later becomes the axle-tree or carden-shaft of a motor-car, is not accidental. It is a minute, careful collection of images, in themselves motionless, but which Eliot sets moving like a clock whose hands rotate with the day and night. The contra-plex is again in use,—the embedded iron, the pebbled sapphire, the stored garlic are all capable of immense activity if they are transposed into a different sphere of circumstance. This transposition of thought, this fusion of substance with abstract conception and inversely the use of abstract conception manœuvred into substance causes the reader a temporary sense of crushing contradictions. Actually the shuttle carries the thought-thread industriously backwards and forwards and by the thickness of thread

above thread Eliot collects the whole texture which is ultimately his poem. Then it is that we find there has been no real contradiction at all, but a movement of equal strength in opposite directions, like positive and negative electricity. It is this perfect balance of oppositional thinking strength, towards and away from actuality, that creates the rhythmic rise and fall of his objective work. The quietness, the restfulness of " Burnt Norton " is encompassed by the articulate restraint with which the vast subjects of " timelessness " and " interchanging fantasy " with reality are organized and guided into the pen of human conception. As a tree is chained in sphere by its roots, as a fish is restricted by water, so is the human being limited in action by a few degrees of heat or cold. Eliot follows this scientific channel closely. He does not hitch his wagon to a star that drops him panting and exhausted in its aftermath of despair, nor does he go down to the gloom of Hades. He keeps steadfastly to the breathing plain allotted to human life ; he appreciates the narrow scope within which we have our being, and by doing this he achieves a scope of thinking far beyond the inflated courage of bombastic flags that wave Excelsior—so impossible to reach.

What has Eliot achieved ?

The delicate poise of thought flowing in two directions, but in equal strength, the balance between those things which we imagine possess the texture of reality and those things that occur and have the texture of memory. Is there any difference between the two ? Don't they both belong to the realm of conjure ? One in possibility, the other as a shadow of the past. Both are real to us, because no longer reality.

It is impossible to know what *now* is ; we are either conjecturing it or remembering it. Therefore the actual moment of *now* must be the pivoting neutral point of conscious living.

When Eliot widened the conception of the Imagistic movement into the dialectic dialogue, he had taken an important step ; but when his technique was so skilled that he maintained the essence of dialogue in monistic form he

founded a " school." In all Eliot's later work his thought is kept in flux, neither by a Dr. Watson nor an oration. His mind has ejected a yeast ball of fermenting thought in continuous spontaneity.

Later we shall go back to examine the musical phrases ; dialogues and imageries that made it possible for Eliot to think and write in dual direction. His subtle intergradations, his sensitiveness to form, his reasoned search for an interprative motive behind the necessity of living, shows a poet both aware of his background and of what goal he wishes to reach.

The actual words used are no more poetic than the single notes of a common chord are music. But if we take the whole chord or the complete musical phrase we have a perfect analogy of what Eliot strove to find and has achieved through his panoramic conception of poetry.

Let us try out his music, listen to the cadence and its answering falling sequence ; the refinement of touch ; the restful beauty that is obtained through restrained directional thinking. There is no plunging, bracing or sword rattling ; no baroque intensity or bizarre coquetry with a pretence of life, God or fashion. He reiterates the " C Major of this life," the dominant note of the majority who live this earth-life, and he strives to probe what this major activity fulfils.

First comes the concrete phrase passing into abstraction :

> " Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future,
> And time future contained in the past."

There is no contradiction. The results of present experience become memories and upon the basis of this collective past, the future with its past experience is founded.

Now follows the completion of the opening phrase, the contra-plex, which takes the abstract into the concrete—

> " Down the passage which we did not take
> Towards the door we never opened
> Into the rose-garden."

Then the final duality, the counterpoint movement in one musical phrase,

> " There they were, dignified, invisible."

Everyone's imagination contains dignified, concrete images of loved people or things, who are out of reach, which are beyond contact; invisible and yet so full of reality to our inward knowledge:

> "Go, go, go, said the bird; human kind
> Cannot bear very much reality."

There is no place for scoffing here. We who know what the passing of life means, in the love for those who are no longer with us, have experienced the overwhelming crush of their real yet invisible presence. Human kind cannot bear very much reality. Again if we were asked to explain the present, could we illustrate it with greater skill than this:

> "At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless:
> Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
> But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity."

Now come back to the narrow strata of our capacity of living:

> "Time past and time future
> Allow but a little consciousness.
> But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden
> The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
> The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
> Be remembered."

Life is aware of its consciousness of having lived, only through its recollection of the events which occurred. The events are influenced by all that preceded them. It is no use to bare our breasts to the stars, to dare them to fail to drag our waggon. We have to find out what we and the past "we" did, which fumbled with a future and gave it its oncoming shape. Our past is neither forgiven nor forgotten, it goes along with us. "The sins of the fathers shall be visited unto the third and fourth generation." Is there a braver, cleaner answer than this, to those who would seek an escape from their deeds?

Eliot has not swept a rainbow paintbrush across an exotic heaven; he has used the ingredient of concentrated thought, the iron key with which each one is supplied to solve the meaning of life and by reasoning find the door and the key-hole which will let us through to a possible

Garden of Eden,—to something that lies in a better category than this present destructive retribution. And so Eliot's penultimate phrase is " In my end is my beginning."

E. M. STEPHENSON.

[This inquiry into the significance of Mr. Eliot's work based on a comment on *Burnt Norton*, of which Mr. Eliot has expressed appreciation will be followed by a further note based on *East Coker* and the *Rock Choruses*.—ED.]

### QUALITY IN MODERN VERSE

*A New Anthology of Modern Verse* (Methuen, 6s.) is really an extension of Sir Algernon Methuen's *Anthology of Modern Verse* and being edited by C. Day Lewis and L. A. G. Strong, may be considered a serious and representative collection of the key poems of the last twenty years. . . . It should be most valuable to the explorer of poetry and be useful in testing our reactions to modern verse whatever our personal attitude and age may be. Hence the earnest reader will examine this collection with eagerness. It supplies largely new period work but on the surface one finds little that is now revolutionary. Continuity is apparent. Actually very few extremely modern innovators in verse are included. With many now old-timers, including the compilers themselves, Edmund Blunden, Herbert Palmer, the Sitwells, Thomas Hardy, Robert Bridges, Richard Church, A. E. Housman, W. B. Yeats, Walter de la Mare, and the key-men of the late 20's, W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, T. S. Eliot, we have little that is representative of later developments, or emerging writers,—a poem each by A. E. Coppard, David Gascoyne, Kenneth Hare, Kenneth Allott, G. H. Luce, Charles Madge, Ruth Pitter, Anne Ridler, Randall Swingler, A. S. J. Tessimond, Ruthven Todd, Laurence Whistler, and two each by Rex Warner, Hugh McDiarmid, John Lehmann, Christopher Hassall, Clifford Dyment, and John Betjeman, and four items each by Louis Macneice and Dylan Thomas.

Perhaps the standard set by the compilers was too exclusive. They both looked for the same qualities in poetry,—passion, music and precision. Incidentally these two authorities agree that Eliot's influence on the younger poets was a revolutionary one ; it was through him chiefly that the technique of the French symbolist school was communicated to them. He showed them that " the tradition had collapsed and they must break new ground for themselves." But do these chosen younger poets prove themselves to be markedly different in technique and content from the preceding generation, in being more politically minded, more specifically concerned with social problems, the weakening if not the complete rejection of a common religious or social belief, in the increased complexity of modern developments now arrested?

Mr. Strong again asserts that the only thing that matters about poetry is that it should be good poetry,—the political and other beliefs of a poet are important only in so far as they inspire him to write good poetry. But who among us, with prejudices and errors of taste and other limitations, can insist on what is poetry,—the adjective is superfluous,—of an unfathomable depth, timeless, independent of all circumstances, fashions, years, schools, sicknesses, quarrels? Do these examples of the best in contemporary poetry meet these demands? If we say they do not, may the fault not be in ourselves?

Some of the later examples show that the dry bones are being clothed again. An arresting phrase, a majestic line creep in. Poets we knew in an older world had been nurtured on the Bible, Homer, Milton, uncritical of factual or scientific inexactitudes, and they could quote long passages from each to suit any occasion. And in their writings they were lords of language, not derivate but communicative. Some young writers are proud of not knowing these fathomless depositories of eloquence and sonority or have found them dull and yet they hope to be the interpreters of a new apocalyptic era. Some hint of their stark self-sufficient influence is discernible in this touchstone of an anthology but the suggestion of a deeper communism, a stronger humanism is more apparent, with the ultimate hope that skilful verse may grow into recognizable poetry.

Naturally the compilers have something to say about the reading and speaking of poetry as the best test of it and the best means of communicating it, as we have been insisting for thirty years. They are critical of B.B.C. methods. "Instead of showing poetry as an activity lying at the roots of life and springing straight from the heart, they surely make the ordinary listener feel that it is something detached, irrelevant, 'highbrow,' and above his head." Again, as with poetry itself, who can produce agreement on the vocal interpretation of poetry? It is a simple matter of sense and sensibility, but like the name of gentleman, is defamed by ignoble use and mouthed by every charlatan. The reading of poetry has become an intolerable obsession. We have self-sufficient young men and women with plum duff voices and artificial enunciation, boring antipathetic audiences with spiritless reading of poor poems, the choice of which is a primary error that cannot be eliminated and carries its own severe condemnation of the reader's ignorance of poetry. These over or under elocuted "speakers" and readers are infinitely worse than the untrained unpractised efforts of the instinctive poetry lover, who, however, should not be praised for being handicapped by an untrained, undeveloped voice and a nervous manner. We would like Mr. Strong and Mr. Day Lewis to arrange public readings of poems in this Anthology as a test of their quality and of the competence of the readers.

Satire, a neglected weapon, rides full tilt through *Saturnalia in the Suburbs* by John Nicholas (Heath Cranton, 3s. 6d.). The action is

placed too far ahead,—in 1988. Otherwise this lively extravaganza flays the absurdities and artificialities of our own days, except and apart from the war. Suburbia revolts merrily and absurdly against the comfortable, enervating conditions of modern civilizations which had made the gods say wearily, " Knowledge has made them little,—they are dull." . . . The first part tell in rhyming couplets the effect on the population of the spoon feeding by press and radio,which led to the absurd re-action.

" On every point of conduct, thought and feeling
The Press was multifariously revealing :
It searched things like a conscientious vandal,
And told the truth as if it were a scandal.
Whoever smashed the window of success
And drew a crowd was welcome to address
The gaping gazers, the absorbent host ;
And loudest smash was listened to the most,
The secret springs of wisdom and authority
Being at last discovered in Publicity. . . .
While titled eavesdroppers in keyhole pars
Scented the vices of the social stars,
And canons, crooks and cranks like London pigeons
Cooed line-age (at good rates) on ' Our Religion '."

Education, entertainment, religion, housing, domestic life is bitingly described and with great gusto. Mr. Nicholas pictures " prosy poets, posily interned In competence . . . "

Like prisoners picking oakum : word by word
They felt each one to see if it was furred
Or chromium plated : while on archless feet
Their verse limped forth a flat and wingless bleats
The dribbling whine and utterance of defeat. . . .
To them the birds and bees made hack refrain,
And simple love songs stung them to disdain.
There was no love, they only knew of sex,
Which being complex must be expressed complex-
Phrase tentative, synthetic, vague, abstruse,
The cube, the square root of hypotenuse
(Which doesn't mean a thing but serves to show
How rhyme-begot profundities do grow)
And Lawrence-led, sick, suppurant, Satanic,
They strove to sing the visceral volcanic
In theoretic trendoy :
Prosodic subtlety,
Onomatopoeia, assonance, hiatus,
Which make high mystery of their afflatus.
(The highest art is never understood,
It's always higher when it's misconstrued.)

So Eliot droned across his drear allotment. . . .
Maundering in the wasteland of Mood,
Making wry mouthings at Romance turned rancid ;
While Mister Ezra Pound
Provencally provincially profound,
Provincial from Hoboken to Cathay,
Blew marvels on his own and other's trumpets.
His jonglar Muse was generally catty,
And both of them grew punditally ratty
With less scholastically costive blokes. . . . "

The young gods take a hand in upsetting the flat and flaccid regimentation with hilarious effect richly described by Mr. Nicholas in skilful verse and cruel parodies and exacerbating satire that must be read as a whole for the continuity, the fun, the bite, the whimsey of it all.

In *Trelawney : A Man's Life* (Robert Hale, 15s.) Margaret Armstrong tells in arresting straightforward fashion the romantic, picturesque story of Swinburne's

Worldwide Liberty's lifelong lover,
Lover no less of the strength of song,
Sea-king, swordsman, hater of wrong.

Less judicial than Mr. H. J. Massingham in his memoir, " The Friend of Shelley," Miss Armstrong is more sympathetic and simpler in her readable narrative based on Trelawney's own " Adventures of a Younger Son " and his " Recollections of Shelley and Byron " and his frank correspondence. But she is more than half-way through her book before she arrived at the great and aiding interest of her hero's life and his firm right to immortality—his acquaintance with Shelley, with whom he lived in admiration at Pisa and Lerici during the last few months of the poet's life. Of their daily intimacy in these last days, Trelawney has written fully in his *Recollections*, quoted or neatly paraphrased by his biographer. The restless buccaneer went with Byron to Greece, disagreed with him, had his own exotic adventures and returned to England to live another half century famous as the faithful friend of Shelley until in 1881, in his eighty-ninth year, he was buried besides that " Heart of hearts " in the grave he had prepared in Rome so many years before.

Three Poetry Reviewers have had small collections of poems published recently—two by the Favil Press (Mr. Christmas Humphreys and Miss Margery Smith), and the third (Mr. Curt Peters) by the Grey Walls Press. The work of each is familiar to us and needs neither introduction nor commendation. Readers have already become acquainted with their skilful technique and individual content. The thirty-five *Poems of Peace and War* (4s. 6d.) prove that it is more

than personally profitable for a lawyer to fill up intervals in Court or the journeys between Courts to refresh himself by writing poems that are an expression of an acute mind trained in the subtleties of the middle way and of a conscious desire for inner appeasement and the sublimation of motion as well as emotion. In consequence there is no obscurity and no degeneracy in these poems. In peace the theme is joy—" I sing of joy,—we've songs enough of sorrow— . . . I sing of love—we've hymns enough of hating. . . . I sing of life,—of love with vision blending,—

> O faith that sees the severed parts made whole,
> The heart that knows no ill,
> But moves with shining will,
> Aflame with life, towards the goal . . .
> The sunlight has no ending."

Courage and conviction, without faltering or doubt. . . . And in war a similar certainty and definition :

> I banish fear. With heart and mind elate
> Wide visioned as the darkness ebbs away
> I move on gentle feet, compassionate,
> With eyes that knowing fear and sorrow, wait
> Watching the dawnlight of an ampler day.
> The winds of war may fell the noblest tower ;
> The heart resplendent dominates the hour,
> No more afraid. . . .
> Let there be neither doubting now, nor tears ;
> He nothing fears
> Who life itself wears lightly, as a flower.

Miss Margery Smith, in her thirty poems *In Our Time* (3s. 6d.) is a kindred spirit more inspired by nature than philosophic meditation. She has a developed natural instinct for form, flexible, skilful, clear and clean-cut, with adroit manipulation of sprung-rhythms. And in content she is equally sure and individual. To her

> War brings tears, but humour does not sleep ;
> Horror is hers, yet valour holds the hour.
> She shall not prevail, nor long would she dare—
> The wings of peace are ever poised in the screaming air !

Her " Spring " is a pulsatile song of joy and love and fire,

> This is the time to be born,
> When Spring flings
> Her thirsty, bursting buds to the morn,
> And the thrush, torn
> With the joy, joy, joy of it,
> Sings of it,
> Sings !

*Between Two Worlds* by E. Curt Peters (3s. 6d.) is less attractively, cleanly produced than the Favil Press volumes. The poet deserves to be better served and to be more adequately represented. He has a wider range, a firmer grasp of essentials, a deeper irony than " this slim volume " presents. This patterned poet, with meticulous care for the exact word, the arresting phrase and the precise image, is developing a mastery of poetic realism, with a growing awareness of the lasting values of life, that place him above the cacophonous crowd of jejune experimentalists. Two of these volumes omit the definite article from their acknowledgments to THE POETRY REVIEW.

Mr. Curt Peters has the true poet's sensitiveness to all things, beautiful and painful, lasting and ephemeral. He writes of them sometimes in sadness, even in occasional bitterness as in " The Clock," but for the most part in an undimmed wonderment of spirit, especially when watching the processional pageant of skies and seasons. For him there is always significance in what he sees and his colourful descriptive language in its turn serves to give reality to the human philosophy underlying his verses.

The great literature of the world is also its great wisdom and always applicable to the dominating events at any period of history. Prof. G. Wilson Knight, grandly assisted by Mr. Henry Ainley, has emphasized this in his admirable presentation of Shakespeare's philosophy, punctuated by commentaries, in *This Sceptered Isle*, at the Westminster Theatre. Some of the speeches and excerpts had only a suggestion of costume and scenery, others were more fully equipped, but all were packed with a significance that was profoundly revealing. Shakespeare knew that the destinies of Britain, as that of the world, turned on moral strength, and that the reward of tyranny was ultimate destruction. Apart from these healthy revelations it was delight to hear Shakespeare's poetry beautifully declaimed and to listen for the first time to the lesser known words of Timon as well as the long loved and familiar soliloquies.

We regret that in our notice of Miss Viola Meynell's admirable *Anthology of Nature Poetry* (Cape), the title was given incorrectly.

### THE POETRY REVIEW IN WAR TIME

The printers wish us to state that although they do their utmost to meet the demands of their customers they cannot keep to a time schedule now that so many of their experienced men and others have been taken from them. Some delay in the appearance of THE POETRY REVIEW is inevitable. Present conditions have aggravated technical and editorial difficulties. It has been suggested that a bi-monthly with reduced size involves very little work. Such an opinion has very little relation to fact and experience. A smaller issue makes little dif-

ference to the comping, making up, machining, binding and despatch of an issue. To get together a few articles and a few poems may seem to be a very simple and brief business. But reduced space does not mean a reduced number of MSS. for consideration. It does not check the inflow of contributions, but it does involve greater care and anxiety as to how the reduced space—doubly precious now on account of steeply rising costs of production—shall be used. To consider so many MSS. when so few are needed is not a work of supererogation. That reading is not a casual, amateurish business, but a serious expert job based on experience accompanied by a flair possessed by few, an impersonal detachment and a discriminating taste uninfluenced by the moods, fashions, dictates of the moment. Form as well as content has to be considered; the derivative as well as the original to be recognized: technical faults that mar ambitious work, weakness of scansion, false and half-rhymes on which the captious critic loves to pounce, discerned. Ultimately a second or third opinion may be obtained on recommended work, especially if it is of the modernist type. One may be far from being a septuagenarian without feeling in complete accord with some phases of modern expression; the opinion of a competent assistant more in sympathy with contemporary idioms is valuable. And an article may go several times to and fro between editor and author before agreement is come to on a question of treatment or opinion, with more possibilities of further postal delays. It would be easier and time-saving to draw for both prose and verse on a small coterie in the customary manner of literary periodicals, never venturing to admit an outsider until he has pushed his way in elsewhere when he becomes a discovery. But from the days of Stephen Phillips, we have welcomed song from any bush, paying attention to the work and not to the name attached, becoming a clearing house for poetic effort, doing an invaluable, unique service. It may be quixotic, with little credit and no gain and in consequence an amount of inevitable misunderstanding of such apparent unworldliness and wastage. But we have discovered a few good poems, recognized some promising work, provided an opening for some who had been beating in vain against the bars. And we believe that to continue this work in wartime is to render an essential service. In prose too it would be easier to be the parrots of other voices but instead of repeating opinions expressed elsewhere we have welcomed the gifts of the gods, the unsolicited contributions with a virility, freshness and individuality of criticism and statement although they may entail the prolonged discussions mentioned above.

The wind bloweth where it listeth and the spirit of man grows restless and insistent in the face of calamity. The Paper Control does not prevent new poems coming to birth or the conception of urgent articles on the past, present and future of poetry. At the moment we are welcoming more poems from airmen and tankers.

# DUNKIRK

DOWN through the distant ages when our history is read,
And the urchin thumbs his text-book with the normal school-boy dread,
And the horror that is passing, as a crimson setting sun,
Lingers on the pages as a battle lost or won :
What will his startled vision see ?—
An England still so bold and free
With dull guns booming at the lust-mad Hun ?

Those darkest deeds of violence where deep groans of the sea
Echoed through the channel-ports to a stunned humanity ?
Men tossed by high-explosive and battered down to hell—
Trapped within a terror that no words can aptly tell ?
Who could ever hope to save ?—
Death comes but once to stalwart brave
Whose minds are turned to cottages and a homely country smell.

Dunkirk dripping from a fountained blood and fire !
When from the playing fields there came as offerings to the pyre
Beardless, smiling youngsters whose eyes saw far,
Filling bitter cloud-banks with the dismal sounds of war :
Nor did these boys of England pause—
English freedom was their cause,
Where machine-gun rattle and the big bombs jar.

Slashing through the surly heaven were streaks of sodden grey—
The Heinkel and the Messerschmitt were diving for their prey ;
The swarming sky was shot with flame, while rushing to the kill,
The motors drummed and time stood still.
But print can never tell the tale :
How English lads, though weak, prevail,
And battle on to victory with their stubborn English will.

The epic done at Marathon beside the Grecian sea,
The Spartans brushing out their hair before Thermopylae,
The story we would chant again at Horatio's escapade,
The splendour of a mighty charge by a lost light brigade,
Must welcome to Elysian fields,
Brought home again upon their shields,
Those beardless British youngsters who joined our annaled brave.

San Rafael, Calif. CULLEN JONES.

## LONG-TAILED TITS

YOU cannot tempt them to window sill, bird table,
They will not recognize you as akin,
Like the robin across long evolutionary space;
Nor will they, famished by winter, lose their fear,
Accept you as willing, able
To feed faint life within.
They have no need of necessitous recognition
And live but on the verge of consciousness;
Yet here
They swing their cradles in the air,
Anchored to earth by the proverbial hair,
(Filched from the dozing mare!)
But free in winter, like a swarm of bees
They hang in the tops of trees,
A faerie band of momentary grace
And small high confidences, lost intuition
Fails to record or guess.

BRENDA F. SKENE.

## CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES

ALL is silent on the boulevard—
not the silence binding souls in understanding harmony
but stillness as if Death had just passed by
leaving in his wake a wordless suffering.
It is Paris, now, in nineteen forty-one.

Sticky buds of chestnuts this tragic spring
disclose their treasured knots of tender leaves
just as usual on the boulevard.
Morning sunshine slanting beams through budding trees
traces criss-cross patterns on the ground.
Many, many benches empty and forlorn
could tell of hours of laughter when the French were gay.

Suddenly a gust of wind made trees to shiver
a long-drawn soughing sound dispersed the silence.
It was a sigh of anguish from a broken-hearted city.

Vancouver, B.C.

JULIET YOUNG.

The Canadian Authors' Association 1940 award for poetry has been made to E. J. Pratt, Professor of English at the University of Toronto, for his epic poem "Brebeuf and His Brethren," which relates the martyrdom of the Jesuit missionaries in Huronia.

## TO AMERICA

THERE is a time for the Voice gloriously praising
The free unpolluted air and the staunch fighter,
A time to proclaim in glowing terms the Right:
But the time is not now.

There is a time for thunderous denouncing
This monster of vileness that gathers momentum,
Blotting the fair places of the earth, raising
A plague of festering limbs and flies:
But the time is not now.

That time has passed when the Word had power, a weapon
Dulled and blunted by reiteration.
A time to speak will be the hour of renewal,
When the tortured task is completed.

Be silent, Big Brother, lest your talk chill the faint hearts
Of nations shuddering in the slime of the dragon.
You who alone walk freely in the sunshine
Will you await, as the others waited, one by one,
Till Beauty and Valour are slain, and the Devil's work done,
And you ripe for despoiling?

Leave us to strive and speed and anguish unspoken.
We have passed beyond the meed of encouragement or blame,
Fear of death or hope of fame,
Knowing we must endure unto the end or perish.
Talk no more though you love us, brother, but come
To fight at our side for God, for home,
Silent and grim, as we fight now.

DULCIE EDEN GREVILLE.

## BANSHEE OVER ENGLAND

WE who sang Agincourt, Plassy, Albuera,
And piled a wall of enemy dead at Mons,
Now cower to wait the unresisted blow
Crashing through ceiling, blasting age and bud,
Struck at the heart in England's darkest night.
And once the banshee wailed the death of one,
O'er farm or castle rose a mourning cloud,
Round hearth or table crouched the shivering group
Waiting the certainty resolved above,

When the dark angel shall have claimed a soul.
Yet 'twas a pitying spirit filled the air,
Now a dull threat, a voice grown sinister—
Five hundred dead last night on Merseyside,
Five thousand gallant, stunted Clydeside Scots,
Rivetting, building, hammering against terror,
Pitting their thwarted, city cabined manhood
'Gainst menace never challenged Bruce or Wallace.
Fierce crash and flameburst, roof and walls your tomb,
A gaptoothed street or emptied city vista,
Pompeii come to Coventry and Bristol,
But morning sunlight on the morgue, eyes right,
Death isn't glorious and to mourn is treachery,
Only made easier, that we dare not fail.
So women dazed and dingy, homeless, fireless,
Stare at the morning ruins, silent birds,
Surviving children chirp to see the sun
And little gardens tell of life not Hitler's,
The rooks are nesting and the tall trees swing.
But any night—that wail of all the world!
That desperate dirge for our eclipsèd sun
And now the stifled crying for our dead,
Dead in their little houses as they lived,
Wiped out defenceless, and behold, no choice,
Crouched, hating fear and nightly facing terror
Because a viler terror must be slain
And buried at the crossroads of the nations,
Our spearshaft through the corpse for earth to witness,
And pray no evil ghost survive to haunt us.

Brighton. REDCLIFFE MCKIE.

To the American tributes we may add OUR NAME from A. GERTRUDE ADAMS, of Hobart, Tasmania:

For centuries they bore a noble name!
In time of war, and through the racing seas!
In rain, and storm, in snow, and icy breeze
Their courage, and endurance were the same.
Danger and suffering kindled hearts to flame;
They knew not comfort, and they craved not ease;
The Glorious Flag that graced the olden field
Our mighty sons upon their shoulders bear;
To serve the younger nations and to shield,—
Triumphant in their cause, and country fair,
No man will falter, and no man will yield!

# DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: XCI

In *Flashing Wings* by William Plumer Fowler (Bruce Humphries Inc., Boston), a new poet's voice lifts in New England. Lover and painter of his New Hampshire hills, Mr. Fowler brings to us in these fine sonnets the glory of that scene. In New England, rich in tradition and record of poets, he takes a distinguished place. A few lyrics are included in this volume but Mr. Fowler's genius is for the sonnet. In "Intolerance," Mr. Fowler has drawn so perfectly the lizard that, after reading it, we know the rascal:

> The lizard clings, undaunted, to the ledge
> That falls away precipitous and sheer:
> He scorns the vixen cringing at its edge,
> Ignores the squirrel chattering in fear;
> His beady eyes disdain the beasts below—
> The beaver and the bear, and all the rest:
> What hope have they to climb where he can go,
> Above the tallest pines where blue jays nest?
> His vision to the rock is close confined:
> His sluggish soul can never soar in flight,
> But, sneering, stays to winged beauty blind,
> In living darkness in the midst of light—
>  Until, one day, by talons borne on high,
>  He breathes his last, convinced that hawks can't fly!

Poetry does not just happen, it is the distillation through generations of persons loving beauty, loving truth, or are they the same?—And necessitated by these loves desiring expression.

William Plumer Fowler was born at Little Boar's Head in the town of North Hampton, New Hampshire, August 5th, 1900, his father, a Boston lawyer, holding up the New England tradition of ability and achievement. A landscape painter of discrimination and ability, the boy William spent his winters in Boston and summers at the seashore; schooled in the Public Schools of Boston and Brookline and the Roxbury Latin School, he graduated *Cum Laude* in 1917. In 1918 Fowler enlisted in the Dartmouth Unit of Satc and received an honourable discharge of the U.S. Army at the close of the war. He received the degree of *A.B. Magna Cum Laude* from Dartmouth in 1921, and graduated from the Harvard Law School with the degree of L.L.B. in 1927. He is married and has two children, a girl and a boy. The greater part of his poems have been written from 1938 on.

In asking him for an expression on poetry, he sends us the following:

"When the thought content of verse is inspiring or suggestively stimulating, we have poetry—the embodiment of the highest artistry in the use of words and sentences to express human thoughts, perceptions, experiences, emotions. Like all the arts, poetry portrays, and preserves for posterity, transitory aspects of life or nature. True poetry embodies vision, and inevitably tints reality with some degree of idealism.

" I write poetry because from time to time some aspect of Truth or of Beauty strikes me with such vital intensity that I cannot bear to have it lost. I want to preserve it in impelling form for my children, and for all who now are, or in years to come may be, capable of appreciating its deep significance. What the sculptor does with marble or bronze, what the artist does with coloured pigments and canvas, this I try to do with words.

" For those who would discard traditional forms merely because they are old, I have little sympathy. There is always place for innovation ; but the fact that a form has weathered the blasts of time may well be an indication that it is inherently more effective than some less difficult modern form of verse. I am convinced that this is true in the case of the sonnet, although six centuries have passed since Petrarch's time. For the expression of an integrated thought in a single word-picture in English, the iambic pentameter, with the Petrarchan rising of the octave and ebbing of the sextet, or the three Shakespearean quatrains bound together with a final couplet, cannot be excelled. Moreover, the sonnet permits of many variations without doing undue violence to the form."

Perhaps all poets have their own favourites among their writings. I agree with Mr. Fowler that " Sunset Quest " is one we will wish to remember :

Far westward, toward a slowly setting sun,
The marsh in wintry loneliness has spread.
A gleaming snow-sheet over grasses dead
And frozen pools that roving sea birds shun ;
And on the crusted snow our long skies run
With easy strides, by magic pole-thrusts sped,
To seek the sun's balloon of flaming red,
Across the marsh, before the day is done.

From wooded islands, lengthened shadows creep
Forever eastward on a sea of white ;
And heeding them, we end our sunset quest.
Now homeward on swift hickory we sweep,
Behind two skiers of tremendous height—
Our shadows that escort us from the west.

John Harsen Rhoades has surprised his many friends by his devotion to poetry, the writing of it and the reading of it. In *Church Without Walls*, (Henry Harrison, New York) we find that the poems have been published before and widely through the American magazines. I asked Mr. Rhoades why he wrote poetry. His answer follows :

" I do not write poetry : I merely write my thoughts in rhythm, but, to me, rhythm is the line of demarcation between poetry and prose. Poetry would play a much bigger part in the modern

life of to-day if the well-known critics would admit that there are all kinds of fine poetry and praised interesting poems even though the technique did not come up to their standard. I know many people who claim they are not interested in poetry and I believe it is largely due to the fact that they have been told by these critics that good poetry can only be found in such magazines as the *Atlantic Monthly*, *North American Review* and *Voices*."

Here are breezy, pleasant verses, and many striking quatrains such as " Lines in Poetry " :

> The faultless form or perfect line
> Can never be great art,
> Unless there live within the frame
> Some essence of the heart.

*Periphery of Time*, the third book of poems by Christine Hamilton Watson (Fine Editions Press, New York), illustrates again a technical ability and artistic perception. " Golden Doors " proves this contention :

> Because our meagre sense of time and space
> Remains entangled with the earth-bound rust—
> It is but hearts that find the sky, who trace
> The golden doors and songs above our dust.
> These, ever listening, can hear the drum
> And undercurrent of the atmosphere ;
> Hearts, softly poised on equilibrium,
> Which beat against far sounds that disappear.
>
> Let us forget our dusty pedigree !
> The cosmic strain that lives in each of us
> Can find the doors which have no lock or key,
> And entering, we stand incredulous—
> Where carillons of crystal sound rechime
> Against the clear significance of time.

There is a wide range of subjects in this slim volume of sonnets and the poet appears definitely to say what she means to say in all of them.

*The Airmen*, by Selden Rodman (Random House, New York) is described as a narrative poem of singular power that celebrates the aspirations and achievements of fliers from Icarus to the pilots of our own time.

The airplane which is a comparatively new achievement of man has so quickened the imagination and, with the emphasis put upon it by the disaster in Europe, drawn the attention of all peoples of all lands to the airmen that this poem of Mr. Rodman's is enormously interesting. From the visions of Icarus to the tragic, yet inspiring story of Lauro

Bosis this narrative holds the reader breathless. This reviewer, during the last war, was privileged to come in daily contact with airmen through the Treasure and Trinket Fund which she initiated and ran. Subsequently, the distinguished poet and airman—in 1929—translated *Caesar the Undefeated* into Italian. It was thought by several that in the Italian form it might receive a musical setting. De Bosis' letter from Columbia University (Casa Italiana), New York, October 30th, 1929, follows :

> " I have only started reading your drama and I have been carried away by its beauty. I will give all heart and energy to make the best translation I can of it and when you will land in New York after the tour of the world you will be greeted by Julius Caesar in good Italian language and with as good verses as my muse can make.
>
> " I must only ask you for the permission to translate it all in verse. Not only I think it would fit more the poetical spirit that pervades it, but my task will be greatly facilitated Prose is such an objectionable and artificial thing. . . "

All that a reviewer may say of a poet cannot convey as much to the reader as a quotation from his work. Early in this book we find " The Inventor's Prayer," let us read these lines :

> " Father which art in Heaven, Shaker of our finite sense,
> Hear my request :
>
> May this invention, symbol of our search
> For your divinity and our delight,
> Challenging space, this armature of tight-
> Strung manufactured ligaments by which
> Like gods or demons we presume to reach
> Unnatural supremacy,
> Phaeton-like, be
> Closer to heaven, looking down upon
> All bondage with the beneficence of light—
> Seeing what darkly prophets dared foretell ;
> Doing what poets sang of in their verse;
> Captains for commerce ; conquerors for armament ;
> But only mathematicians counted possible—
> May this invention be Your instrument :
> Man's blessing or curse ! "

In the literature of the Air Mr. Rodman's distinguished contribution takes a foremost place.

With a contagious spontaneity the poems in *No Special Pleading*, by Mary Ballard Duryee (G. P. Putnam Sons, New York) hold one. Mrs. Duryee was born in Philadelphia and, as she puts it, was " raised on good literature, good talk and hot milk," and cannot remember the time when she was not writing verses. At the time of her mar-

riage, Mrs. Duryee moved to New York City and for the past four years she has been President of the Women's City Club. A recent letter from Mrs. Duryee says : " Many thanks for proposing me for membership. I like to think that poetry can still live on in London —and that it serves to clarify and evaluate human relations for us to-day."

We pause to read " Temperance Tract " :

When I am safe from spring I pass
For as good a girl as another lass,
I sweep my house and fill my bin
And shake a drink with bitters and gin ;
If my eyes are bright or my words are fond
It's only stuff that's bottled in bond.

Intoxication, my pet, is not
A thing to worry about a lot
When it's out of bottles and into shakers,
You practically know how it takes its takers ;
But the budding bough and the field unfenced
A mother should warn her child against !

These verses are really a lot of fun.

Mrs. Duryee turns with equal facility to the sonnet : " Love Among The Ruins " :

When no more down the shining aisles of spring
You come to me on feet that thread a dance,
When Folly's face is past remembering,
And we've forgotten how to tilt with chance ;
When in your stuffy corner by the fire
Safety and wisdom are the goals of life,
When surety saps the flavour of desire,
And gossip names me nothing but your wife ;
Turn then to that bright chapter written over
With the enchantments that we knew for truth,
Where walk a lady and her perfect lover—
The brave conspiracy we called our youth—
And relish with me through the lengthening day
The spicy tidbits that we tucked away.

In *Little Stories in Verse*, Agnes MacCarthy Hickey presents a delightful little book, charmingly illustrated—a book to give any little boy or girl.

If we turn back the pages of THE POETRY REVIEW, we will find it has followed through a number of years the superlatively good poetry of Archibald MacLeish, who now occupies the position of Librarian of Congress.

In passing, it is interesting to know that on the departure of a Librarian, it is the President of the United States who appoints the successor. We all, who know, are personally grateful to President Roosevelt for having appointed MacLeish to this very important position in our Government. It would take a very long paragraph to give even an outline of the many activities and distinctions of Archibald MacLeish—lawyer, editor, educator, poet, of course, and now Librarian of Congress.

This new volume of his (*A Time to Speak*, a Selection of his Prose : Houghton, Mifflin & Co.) is one this editor highly recommends. Glancing at the titles of the chapters, one is stimulated to own the book. A few of them : " In Challenge, not Defense " ; " The Affirmation " ; " Of the Librarian's Profession " ; " Mr. Sandburg and the Doctrinaires " ; " The Poetry of Karl Marx " ; " Public Speech and Private Speech in Poetry " ; " Question of Audience " ; " A Stage for Poetry " ; " Poetry and the Public World." Perhaps it occurs to you, as it does to me at times, that what is true about love is true about poetry, preachment is useless and though these are brilliant comments and well worth the reading, perhaps we say *au fin*, write poetry or don't but don't talk about it.

There is a chapter in this collection entitled " The Magna Carta "—read it, you will find it very interesting. There is no doubt but what Mr. MacLeish has a driving ideal about the libraries of the world. He dignifies them as the arsenals for the next generation's strength. For that, we are grateful.

With all this preamble on poetry I must quote something too good to leave unrecorded :

> " Poetry is not one of the things which a man or an institution can need or not need, as a shave or a new drop curtain might be needed or not needed. It is one of the things which happen and which, happening, leave nothing as it was before."

In talk about the theatre, there is one phrase that Mr. MacLeish uses that brought me upstanding : " There is the dazzle of the school of Shaw, dazzle like the shine reflected from a window through which no one sees." With this, we take issue. There is much more than dazzle about Bernard Shaw !

Surely by now you will order *A Time to Speak*. Quoting from a poet, well known on both sides of the Atlantic, illustrating the analogy between poetry and love :

> Ah ! it is useless, friend of mine, on love *to preach !*
> Ever, with rising tides this heart is yours !
> Ever, with rising suns and the wan moons of old delight,
> Ever, the distance shortens and your heart allures . . .
> Stronger we are in knowing love's extraordinary might,
> Nothing there is in this vast universe endures
> Like love's tremendous sheltering wings . . . with bright
> Rimmed glory.

Turning to that invaluable source, Edwin Markham's *The Book of Poetry*, we find that Mr. Markham says " Witter Bynner is a distinguished poet who has always been promising greater things than he has ever given. His best work is represented in *Greenstone Poems*, 1917, a volume whose pages are starred with fine lyrics." Louis Undermeyer observes, " the desire for democracy, the same vision rising from what is crude and casual in his previous work is reached (in the *Greenstone Poems*) with a finer restraint and a deeper artistry. Bynner has found not only a sense of life but also a synthesis of it."

In his new volume, *Against the Cold* (Knopf, New York) there is a melancholy note in " Hills of Home " :

Name me no names for my disease,
With uninforming breath ;
I tell you I am none of these,
But homesick unto death—

Homesick for hills that I had known,
For brooks that I had crossed.
Before I met this flesh and bone
And followed and was lost. . . .

And though they break my heart at last,
Yet name no name of ills.
Say only, " Here is where he passed,
Seeking again those hills."

The thought of absence brings us a lilting lyric from Mr. Bynner's accomplished pen :

Absence is only this,
A day or more,
Two days or three or less
And then the shore.

I know the shore is there,
I know, I know,—
Yet cleave, O windy air,
Clear weather, blow !

*Envy Not the Gods*, Raymond Stark's first book (Wings Press, California), is marked by decided talent giving no sign of the beginner. This author, a resident of Kansas City, Missouri, sends us a thought on Poetry :

" There have been few things in life which have given me as much undiluted enjoyment as poetry. I have written verse since first stumbling on to the works of Landor and Herrick about five years ago. I am now twenty-one years of age, soon, probably, to be called to defend Americanism, and I feel that if my existence were to be abbreviated (as doubtless it will) in the coming conflict, I should consider it not to have been so lightly lost if in the intervening time I may achieve only one flawless poem.

" It is my firm belief that poetry of this age is destined to far outlive even the loudest rumblings and thunder of war."

Let us wander " In Woods Forgotten "—

In woods forgotten nightwinds rave,
And storm-clouds haunt the sky;
There lonely lies a sheltered grave
Where sounds no mortal sigh.

The misty raindrops fall below,
The brooklet glimmers clear;
Tread softly, stranger, as you go,
A dream lies buried here.

There is a dolorous note through these lyrics belonging, perhaps, to youth. I remember reading a sonnet of mine to Dr. Bartlett early in my married life which opened as follows:

On life's parched sand I stand with tired feet
In seeking what I find not, weary grown.
Despair lies on my heart like some great stone
Here in the noonday sun and in the heat
The tide of life has ebbed and left me lone,
I hear its distant monotone
Where at the edge its cool waves beat and beat.

And Dr. Bartlett turned to me and said: "My gracious, is it as bad as that?" It is so much easier to write a sorrowful poem than one that has joy in it.

The following is another case in point: Mr. Stark tells us—

Voiceless in the bitter sky
Are the winds we knew so well,
Voiceless, too, are you and I
With the thoughts we may not tell.

Endless teardrops, hearts forlorn,
These have been our heritage,
In the toils of grief and scorn
We have won our little wage.

Though the wind in yonder skies
Slumbers, now its hour has waned,
Still the heart in my breast lies
Heavy, with no wisdom gained.

Edithe Jenkinson (Sheffield): I have always been greatly interested in "Dynamics of American Poetry" by Alice Hunt Bartlett, which has done so much to stimulate interest in American Poetry in this country. The selection of tributes in verse "To England from America" proves how great is the bond of sympathy between us.

## AGAINST THE NEW ORDER

LONDON'S burning ! London's burning !
No reviving, no returning,
There it goes in smoke and flame,
It will never be the same,
It will never be the same.

London Town where I was born
Is a picture charred and torn,
Rich and splendid, dark and mean,
It will never more be seen,
It will never more be seen.

Roaring off to Kingdom Come,
Home and office, church and slum,
Wrapped up in their smoky shrouds,
Blazing on the bronzéd clouds,
Good and evil, foul and fair,
Burn to rubble, ash and air.

Desolation is such fun,
Say the Leveller and the Hun,
Good we build on ill foundations,
Peace on earth from blasted nations,
Fire and Ruin are well done,
Say the Leveller and the Hun ;
Level ! level ! quoth the Devil,
Good and Evil shall be One.

Brave New Worlds are built on rubble,
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble,
Soon we shall produce our Plan
For the Betterment of Man ;
Level ! level ! quoth the Devil,
Good and Evil shall be One.

Union of all Mankind
Dominated by Our Mind,
World Policeman, Judge and Warder
To enforce World Law, World Order ;

Level! level! quoth the Devil,
Good and Evil shall be One.

Soon our Flag shall be unfurled,
Soon shall dawn our Brave New World,
Inequalities smoothed away,
Neither white nor black, but grey,
Tepid, neither hot nor cold,
Middle-aged, not young nor old;
Level! level! says the Devil,
Glory! glory! gloats the Hun,
And Hosannah! shouts the Planner,
Good and Evil shall be One.

* * * * *

We who in the ashes dwell
Want no planned and ordered Hell,
Fight no wars to be policed
When the bombs and fires have ceased;
Life's too precious far to give
For any freedom but to live.

'Twixt the Leveller and the Hun
We are like to be undone,
Shackles of their monstrous Plan
Grip the living mind of Man,
Level! level! quoth the Devil,
Struggle with me if you can!

We who used to lift our eyes
For our succour to the skies,
Find destruction and despair,
Howling desolation where
Hun and Devil now hold revel
And defile our English air.

Lifeless monsters on us fall,
Shrieking, with gigantic sound,
We would turn to something small,
Firmly rooted in the ground;

Though all Hell the Heavens rend
Hope shall rise, and not descend,
From the ruin round our feet,
Gay, invincible and sweet.

Scarcely are the ashes cold,
Dormant seeds beneath unfold,
Twining shoots and leaves are thrust
Through the rubble and the dust,
Green, and shouting in the Sun,
*Good and Evil are not One,*
*Lift your heart up and your head,*
*Living things can cope with dead!*

Bristol 9. GEOFFREY DOBBS.

## THE EXILE

HE knew that there was no returning.
Cut from the parent stem,
All that he had dreamed lay withered in his hands
And as he spoke of them—
Those held, those scattered by the waste lands—
His dry eyed grief gushed inwards, and he trembled.

He had so long dissembled;
Clenched fear within his grip
Lest it should reach his lips: dimly he smiled;
What was there to hope for now? comradeship?
Or the stretching arm of pity—soon defiled:
And the dull hurt of the yearning?

PAULINE E. PROCTER.

## VOICE AND VISION

(From an introductory speech by Dallas Kenmare, at a meeting of the Buckinghamshire Centre of The Poetry Society, July 12th, 1941.)

It is a great delight to me to "introduce" Miss Pitter. The award of the Hawthornden Prize for her book *A Trophy of Arms* in 1936 was not only a joy to everyone who knew her work but an immense encouragement to all who believe, as I do, in a genuine renaissance in English poetry. For some long time it has been fairly evident to

observant readers and critics of acute perception that the period of ugliness and obscurity, so painfully obvious in poetry since the 1914–1918 war, was drawing to a close, and a new spirit asserting itself. I have gone so far in one of my recent essays[1] as to hold the " death, destruction and despair " poets largely responsible for present conditions, which probably seems a rather exaggerated view, yet I have a strong intuition that if the post-war period had bred a generation of Brownings and Blakes instead of those " anatomical " poets, whose function at best was to warn and at worst to nauseate, so spiritually strong a people would have been reared, a people so clear-visioned, with so clean a sense of moral and spiritual integrity, that *true* progress, arising from a spiritual awareness of man's real needs, would have come about, and the disasters of the present time simply *could not* have developed. As I never tire of reiterating, as all we who believe it should affirm and reaffirm until our voices are heeded at last, present conditions are entirely due to the neglect of spiritual values and the worship of materialism in their stead. On every issue of THE POETRY REVIEW we read the words " Where there is no vision the people perish " ; now we are brought face to face with the truth of those words, and until the meaning of " vision " is understood there can be no recovery from the death-disease of the present age.

We who love poetry and appreciate its value, its power to heal and save, are concerned to know how it can take the place it should in human life. Possibly the answer, or at all events a vital and essential part of the answer, lies, as so often, in education. If children cannot, through lack of understanding in the parents, be taught to love and value poetry at home, then it is important that teachers should be chosen whose own love of poetry cannot fail to set that same love ablaze in the pupils. Therefore an academic education, a thorough " knowledge " of poetry, is not enough ; such knowledge in any subject is never enough, the teachers must have pre-eminently what Fiona Macleod called " a crown of stars and a slaying sword "—imagination. Only this gift has the power to inflame and inspire others. And children are very likely to respond whole-heartedly to poetry, because usually in the child the gift of imagination has not been damaged by the onslaughts of a harsh world. Then again, the way poetry is presented, in public recitals and in broadcasts, is vitally important. I have listened recently to most of the broadcast discussions called " Well-versed," and have been amused, though rather saddened, to observe the widely divergent views on the speaking of poetry. I am not myself in agreement with those poets and critics who believe in a lifeless, monotonous, non-dramatic manner (this was all too admirably demonstrated in Mr. Louis Macniece's reading of the ballad *Edward*). I am strongly in favour rather of dramatic representations, or perhaps I should say *true* representations, allowing the speaker to follow profoundly the *meaning* of the words spoken, which, in a sense,

[1] *The Prophet of England. Poetry Review*, Nov.—Dec., 1940.

would produce a *natural* manner, and yet it would always be " the art that conceals art," since, as we all know, verse-speaking is a very subtle art indeed, and it is never enough for an untrained reader simply to read a poem naturally, believing that the proper result must inevitably follow.

I want to say something about the evidence for the renaissance I spoke of—because there *is* evidence, apart from the encouraging recognition of such poets as Ruth Pitter, Christopher Hassall and Lawrence Whistler, and the deeply significant Christian development in such a great contemporary poet as T. S. Eliot. Even Auden, I understand from reviews of his latest production *New Year Letter*, has been investigating mysticism and Christian, as well as other, philosophy, and I believe has been " guilty " of writing some quite beautiful and poetic lines! I think there has been a very determined movement among many of the genuine contemporary poets to remain true to their own vision, irrespective of the literary cliques, and such determination is proof of the integrity of any artist. And the " other evidence " I refer to comes from numbers of young artists, poets and others, in the early twenties, who are passionately accepting the sacramental view of art which Eric Gill lived mainly to affirm. (I should say in passing that with much of Gill's aesthetic theory I cannot find myself in agreement, but his belief that to create is to pray lies at the very root of my own beliefs, and I feel that until the severed link between art and religion is repaired there can be no healthy life either for art or religion. A newly-vitalized Christianity and a newly-Christianized art seems to me the great hope for the future.) Artists must understand religion, religion must understand art, not look askance at it, as it so often does, suspecting it of some obscure form of immorality. Artists, the passionate lovers of beauty, are mistrusted it seems just because they *are* lovers, great lovers of life. And this love which possesses the artist is much more than personal, and poetry is perhaps its truest expression, because poetry, working always with words as its medium, is for this reason the most " personal " of the arts, the most intimate too, in aiming to express plainly what music, painting and sculpture only suggest, yet unless it has a searching, superpersonal quality, it fails as poetry and must be classed as verse.

Because we all feel so deeply the tragedies and horrors of the present time, I should like to end with some words from Wilson Knight's great book, *The Christian Renaissance*, words which I often repeat to myself now when I grieve over the destruction and the ruthless death confronting us on every hand, when I am driven to wonder for a moment whether it can ever be possible to find our way back to beauty and truth :

> The chance against any new and splendid birth seems multitudinous, the old world will slay it if it can, yet that birth inevitably occurs, that birth is mysteriously guarded, and the new life springs strong-limbed in death's despite.

# THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

Our awards are shared between two contributors, one going to Geoffrey Dobbs (Bristol) for his spirited poem "Against the New Order." This title does a good deal to explain the subject-matter, and the poem contains much material for discussion. It is irresistible in its "drive" and rhythm.

Mr. Dobbs has attempted to put into words the essentially inarticulate traditional English philosophy, so contemptuously summed up in the phrase "muddling through."

The other award is to P. E. Procter (Taplow) for a short lyric, "The Exile." This poem is admirable for the intensity of its feeling, and for its reticence and conciseness; also for the skill and completeness of its form.

In the list of "Highly commended" contributors especial mention must be made of Irene Chapman Benson and Harry Sefton.

## Highly Commended.

Irene Chapman Benson, Winnipeg;
Ellodë Collins, Bournemouth;
Redcliffe McKie, Brighton;
Chloris Heaton Ross, Asheridge;
Harry Sefton, Lytham;
Joan M. Simpson, Rickmansworth;
Brenda F. Skene, Lustleigh;
Margery Smith, Linby;
Ruth Tenney, Streatley;
D.E.Christine Tomlin, Harrogate.

## Commended.

Vere Arnot, Walton-on-Thames;
O. J. Beard, Manchester;
Rachel Boulton, Winscombe;
Clover Bradshaw, Leek;
M. D. Cameron, Kirkhill
T. E. Casson, Ulverston;
Henry Clayton, Water Orton;
Dorothy Rosetta Colls, Chorley Wood;
Howell Davies, Buxton;
O. C. Dougan, Scone;
Marguerite Edgelow, Aylesford;
Evelyn M. Finn, Honiton;
I. Sutherland Groom, Carlisle;
J. W. G. Heaven, Ealing;
W. Help, Wellington;
Peter Higham, London, N.;
Gladys Hunkin, St. Ives;
W. Skene Laurence, Birmingham;
P. E. Leaver, Ambleside;
Mary Stella Ling, Lindfield;
Joyce M. Lloyd, Hassocks;
A.M., Cheltenham;
Mary Mair, Epsom;
Doris Major, Hendon;
E. M. Martin, Bromley;
Kathleen Rooker Mason, Walsall;
G. E. Merrick, Warminster;
Iërne Ormsby, Thurgoland;
Frances Pritchard, Bournemouth;
Angela Raine, York;
Stephen E. Sale, Wokingham;
Roberta Shuttleworth, Guildford;
Hilda M. Slade, Worthing;
Lucas Thompson, Hampton Wick;
Edith M. Walker, Bournemouth;
Phyllis Dulcie Warwick, Newark;
Charles Woodhouse, Haslemere.

This competition feature is continued: closing date Oct. 1.

*TO THE EDITOR :*

## A ROYAL ACADEMY OF POETRY?

Since 1768 there has been a Royal Academy of Arts, founded for the purpose of cultivating and improving the arts of painting, sculpture and architecture. Why is there no Royal Academy of Poetry with similar aims ?

The state of poetry in this country is not a particularly healthy one, as most of us will agree, and I feel that the time has arrived when those of us who care for poetry, and believe that it has a high mission to fulfil, should seek to put our house in order by means of the establishment of a national authority which would make some attempt to separate the wheat from the chaff in the annual harvest of verse that is produced, and help and encourage the unknown writers of promise who struggle so hopelessly for recognition. I believe it would be a great step forward in the advancement of poetry if such an Academy could be constituted and if there were an annual " exhibition " of poetry selected from submissions to the " hanging committee " of the Academy. This selection could be issued in the form of a finely printed volume, compiled in an interesting and intelligent manner, with an authoritative preface dealing with the year's selection and including, possibly, an essay on poetry, or some aspect thereof, by one of the Academicians. An authoritative publication of this sort would have, measured in terms of poetry sales, a considerable public and could, therefore, be produced at quite a modest figure.

Other functions of the Academy might well be the organisation of national lectures on poetry at various centres throughout the country, and the formation of a national library.

The obvious body to begin the movement for the creation of such an Academy is The Poetry Society, and the journal to ventilate and promote such a scheme, The Poetry Review. I fully realize that there would be substantial difficulties to overcome, just as there were when the Royal Academy of Arts was hammered into being, but with a reasonable amount of good will on all sides there seems no valid reason why such a body should not be created.

The constitution of such an Academy could be on broadly similar lines to the Academy of Arts, with the Poet Laureate as president and a council consisting of the generally accepted poets of the day. Admittedly, such a council would include some wildly divergent elements—poets for whom many members of The Poetry Society have scant respect, and also poets who would have scant respect for the work of some of their colleagues. But after the pot had boiled and seethed for some time, I have no doubt that a broad measure of agreement could and would be reached as to what is, and is not, good poetry ; an agreement which would afford some relief and enlightenment to a bewildered general public which, taking it as a whole, is probably as far distant from an understanding and appreciation of current poetry as it has ever been. A further development might also

be the de-bunking of certain poets whom many feel to be due for that scarifying process.

An authoritative Academy, with royal patronage, and power to issue diplomas to its elected members must plainly be under the presidency of the Poet Laureate ; must have the support of The Poetry Society with its distinguished backing ; and must also have the support of many prominent poets who are not members of the Society. It is my suggestion that a sincere attempt be made to weld these various elements together and forge a Royal Academy of Poetry for the honourable and important work of restoring the queen of the arts to its rightful place in the life of the nation.

Ambleside, July 8th. P. E. LEAVER.

THE RECONCILIATION OF TWO GENERATIONS?

We are, thank God, living in a country where we may still agree to disagree without one or other of the protagonists being shot or locked up. As you said in your note in the March-June number of POETRY REVIEW, we do appear to belong to irreconcilable schools, Mr. Fleming on the one hand, Mr. Waller and I on the other. But if we are to disagree, I hope we may do so without recriminations, or we shall betray that very freedom some of us glibly profess. I have the unhappy feeling that my first letter was not so courteous as I could have wished. My custom is, whenever I espy the enemy, to attack headlong, without recking the cost or the weapons. On more mature consideration, I frequently regret an impetuosity which may be misunderstood. If my letter appeared to Mr. Fleming to lack that necessary quality of deportment for which Mr. Williams so rightly asks, then I apologise, sincerely and without reservation.

For the rest, the correspondence reveals a temperamental difference which Mr. Fleming ascribes to a disparity in our respective maturity of judgment. This is a little unfair. The difference lies rather in the fact that Mr. Fleming, whilst admitting the artistic merit of those things which are, to him, old and valued, is unwilling to grant a sympathetic hearing to that which is new. This is surely a mistaken attitude for any critic to adopt,—much more for any poet! The world of to-morrow which each one of us, in our several ways, is fighting for and looking forward to, will not be built on the past. It will spring from a new understanding of the problems and difficulties which surround us. And it is to the art of to-morrow to which we should be entitled to look for a clear realisation and a new expression of these problems, which will help us to the necessary understanding of them.

That an artist should ignore the past, that he should try to create as though it had never been, would, I am convinced, be a mistake. Progress is, in essence, a movement from one stage to the next. But that artists should be content to use only that which, from custom, had become accepted as " poetic " ; that they should deny themselves the

right to explore and experiment in an attempt to *progress*, would be to produce only poor imitations of what has been perfectly done before, and make our art as sterile and as impotent as the products of a modern factory experiment.

I would not have chosen the particular simile which Mr. Fleming holds to ridicule as a ground for defending Eliot, but surely it should be judged, not on numerical speculation as to how many people have ever seen an anaesthetised patient (who of us, for that matter, has ever seen the " eye of Heaven " ?) but only on whether or not it *succeeds*. At the least I should say that, like Donne's " Busy old fool, unruly sun," it attains an element of surprise and novelty which is not unuseful in the opening lines of a poem.

I wish I had met Mr. Fleming. We seem to agree in our verdict on the poetry of the past, and I feel that in discussion we might even come to agree at least on some merit in the present. Many of my generation are fighting, as Mr. Waller has pointed out, for all that is bad, second-rate, cheap in art as in life. That we shall make mistakes is certain. Mr. Fleming will not condemn us for that. For as long as we admit of no terms with the enemy, with insincerity, with the bogus and make-believe, dishonest opinions and superficial loyalties, and that drab, ennervating idleness which precludes honest enquiry and dulls a clear vision, for just so long we shall deserve Mr. Fleming's co-operation and support. Is it too much, also, to ask him to understand us—each in our own way " telling of things that were, fore-telling things to come " ?

Headquarters, 6 A.A. Division, R.A. ALAN ROOK.

## VERSE PUBLICATION IN THE U.S.A.

I have only just now come across Mr. Harrison's denouncement of my article, page 263, May–June, 1940. I have taken time to go down to the city reference library and, from the bona-fide *Writers' Year Book* copied the fifty-two names of poetry magazines in America, published by that reputable periodical by which writers the country over find their avenues of publication. It is true that few of the fifty-two *pay for poems*, and most writers buy a copy or more of the issue containinge their verse. Some magazines may be discontinued; but there are always new ones starting up. The sonnet is popular; but the magazines vie with each other in putting out the bizarre.

Since I was kind enough not to mention Mr. Harrison by name, he needn't have answered—unless he felt guilty. I know they are not circulated outside the contributors—the racket-anthologies, I mean—because libraries do not subscribe for them, though they are sometimes presented with a copy; and because these books are *not* for sale by book-dealers or news stands.

He misread my statement about the forty-ton broadcast. Here, again, I kindly did not mention names. But, since he merely denies

without proving his statement, may I say the *Woman's Home Companion* sponsored Ted Malone who read a few of the poems sent in each week over the radio ; that the *Woman's Home Companion* published a few each month, and that most contributors got a breezy letter from Mr. Malone beginning with a flippant " Hello, there ! " praising their verse but *not* returning it—nor publishing it—right then. National broadcasting, like Columbia, is a " national hook-up," so the gist of the statement and its weight are not nicked by substituting the name of one National Broadcasting system for another. My error was as to name, not situation.

As to seeing a publisher's account books to know how much he made, of course I didn't. But I studied arithmetic when a child and know how to multiply. Multiply the number of individual contributors per volume by the price of one anthology ; subtract the probable cost, which, from my own experience with paper and printing I could get a fair idea of. The result will be the anthologist's profit, minus a few stamps spent and a little cheap stationery and printed folders—to get the suckers.

Multiply the profit per book by (a low estimate) three-quarters of the contributors and you have the profit in one state. Multiply this by say forty of the United States and you have to use digits and digits in the answer. As a matter of fact, we have a brisk trade for what the publishers themselves call " vanity " publishing—both prose and verse. You can get anything published—if you have the price, which, again, is over-much. I have gone into this thing ; have personal letters, bids, come-ons from no less than twenty-seven poetry anthologers. The " publishing " price exceeds from 20 to 120 per cent. what a good, honest printer's bid amounts to, usually with better paper and printing, at that. I know one man who spent $2500 to be published ; and he was ; and he has all but the copies he gave away, mildewing in the dark room of his basement because he learned *after* he had signed the cheques that *distribution* was quite another thing than publishing.

I am sure, this situation is true elsewhere ; because people are universally both gullible and vain. I, personally, went to four different offices, with magnificently sounding names, in New York last year and retrieved—after a few blunt statements—copy I had sent them, to test their reliability. My ! how quickly they produced it ! Though they had been deaf to letters. One of my neighbours has just been to show me with great pride her " first poem " published in a 2,000 page anthology printed on fine paper and well-bound. New York World's Fair folk got out an atrocity both years, fanfared with one " name " to lead off and dwindling into worse than ashes.

But, enough of such. Your last issue was your best, it seems to me, that I have read since subscribing. I feast upon your articles : both sides of a discussion : all sides. *Poetry and Life* is as sane and unbiassed a thing on the subject as I have seen ever. My deep appreciation to its writer !

It would do your courage good to see, as I have seen, fifteen airplanes a day, manufactured, and flown at their new high-speed toward the East!

Wichita, Kansas, Feb. 14th. KUNIGUNDE DUNCAN.

## AMERICAN ALL-VERSE PUBLICATIONS

1—*American Fireside*, 221 East River, Otsego, Mich.
2—*American Poetry Journal*, 141 Ash Avenue, Flushing, Long Island.
3—*American Poetry Magazine*, 1764N. 83rd Street, Waunatona, Wis.
4—*Avon*, 2366 East Grand Blvd., Detroit, Mich. (this has just merged with something else).
5—*The Bard*, 398 Russell Ave., Jackson, Mo.
6—*Berkeley Poetry Magazine*, 221 West Broadway, Patterson, N.J.
7—*Better Verse*, Florence, Oregon.
8—*Blue Moon*, 3328 19th Street, N.W. Washington, D.C.
9—*Bozart-Westminster*, Oglethorpe University, Georgia.
10—*The Circle*, 2015 Kalorama Road, Washington, D.C.
11—*The Circle*, Box 194, Wellesley, Mass.
12—*Cycle*, Homestead, Florida.
13—*Driftwind*, North Montpelier, Va.
14—*Dynamo*, 114 West 14th Street, New York City, N.Y.
15—*Expression*, 221 West Bradley Ave., Patterson, N.J.
16—*Fantasy*, 950 Herberton Avenue, Pillsbury, Penn.
17—*The Galleon*, Box 705, Reading, Penn.
18—*The Garret*, Times-Star Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.
19—*Helicon*, 7235 Bronson Ave., Los Angeles, Cal.
20—*Horizons*, Box 44, East Pasadena Station, Pasadena, Calif.
21—*Kaleidograph*, 702 North Vernon Street, Dallas, Texas.
22—*Lantern*, 62 Montague Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y.
23—*La Paloma*, 221 West Broadway, Patterson, N.J.
24—*Lyric*, 255 (Box), Roanoke, Va.
25—*Modern Bards*, Box 5804, Cleveland, Ohio.
26—*Oregonian Verse*, Portland, Oregon.
27—*Palms*, Box 317, Grant, Mich.
28—*Pegasus*, 67 West 44, New York City.
29—*Poet*, Grand Blvd. and Herbert Street, St. Louis, Mo.
30—*Poet Lore*, 302 Stuart Street, Boston.
32—*Poetry*, 232 East Erie, Chicago, Ill.
33—*Poetry Caravan*, R. R. Number one, Box 55, Lakeland, Florida.
34—*Poetry Digest*, 220 North 42nd Street, New York City, N.Y.
35—*Poetry Forum*, 1500 S. Fifth Street, Philadelphia, Penn.
36—*Poetry Review*, 299 Park Avenue, New York City, N.Y.
37—*Poetry World*, 430 Sixth Avenue, New York, N.Y.
38—*Poetry Magazine*, 55 West 42nd Avenue, New Nork, N.Y.
39—*Prairie Schooner*, Box 1342, Lincoln, Neb.
40—*Prairie Wings*, New Rockford, N.D.

41—*Prelude*, 9235 Agnes Avenue, Detroit, Mich.
42—*Quickening Seed*, 124 West Framles Ave., Columbus, Ohio.
43—*Shards*, Box 2007, Agusta Georgia.
44—*Silhouettes*, 303 Rosewood Court, Onlano, Calif.
45—*Skyline*, Gunnison, Colo.
46—*The Spinners*, 67 St. Mark Place, New York, N.Y.
47—*Spirit*, 381 Fourth Avenue, New York, N.Y.
48—*Step Ladder*, 4917 Blackstone Ave., Chicago, Ill.
49—*Tempo*, Shelbina, Mo.
50—*Verse Craft*, Box 1, Emory University, Georgia.
51—*Vespers*, 966 E 25th Avenue, Patterson, N.J.
52—*Voices*, 45 East 55, New York, N.Y.

Twenty other nationally circulated general periodicals carry verse. About 100 less widely circulated ones.

[Miss Duncan should not classify THE POETRY REVIEW as an "all verse magazine." Although now publishing relatively more new poems than formerly, it remains primarily a poetry review and a periodical of appreciation.]

MARGUERITE JOHANSEN (Swindon), concerning whose work a note appeared in a recent issue: I hope the war is not going to endanger the wonderful work of the Society. It would be sheer folly to fight for Freedom and let Poetry faint by the wayside. I am sure there are few members of our Government who would not recognize this. We all hope for peace, but if it must be war for many a long day yet, let us hope that The Poetry Society will be able to maintain itself unshaken among all the ruins of a gentler age.

R. G. DUFF (Teignmouth): When the black-out is blackest, I tell my Muse to light a love-song. The effect is magical. A great glow of hope and comfort fills the room. Up fly all the blinds (mind-blinds, heart-blinds, house-blinds!) and a fairy searchlight streams out into that vivid land of lovers, that was before the war, can be during the war, and will be after the war untroubled of bombs, Boches, and Home Secretaries. I want to recommend this successful evasion of the regulations to all my fellow poets. The war must dim or narrow many of our outlets into daily life. It need not, I think, obscure even the tiniest of our peep-holes on the eternal?

L. MARGARET TURVEY (Esher), renewing her membership subscription, writes: May I take this opportunity of congratulating The Poetry Society on its success in "carrying out" in face of the existing difficult and discouraging circumstances. It is very certain that amidst all the ruin and destruction of the present days, we realize more and more that the unseen, enduring and indestructible things for which The Poetry Society stands are those which can sustain, guide and uphold us in any and every circumstance of life, no matter how dangerous or difficult.

# MR. LAURENCE BINYON ON THE ENGLISH LYRIC

We are indebted to the Royal Society of Arts for the following extracts from the Trueman Wood Lecture delivered by Mr. Laurence Binyon, C.N. Sir Atul C. Chatterjee, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., Chairman of the Council of the Society, in the Chair. In considering the English lyric as a work of art, Mr. Binyon said : Every successful poem has its own predestined form, the form in which its matter is displayed to the most advantage. Every syllable in it, every vowel and consonant, has its value in the whole effect. We cannot separate the form from the matter and treat of it in the abstract. Nor can we separate the matter from the form, since the sound, the rhythm, are an essential element in the meaning.

Perhaps the first thing that strikes one in the growth and development of the English lyric is the comparative absence of set forms of verse, such as seem much more congenial to the Latin races. At one moment, towards the end of the nineteenth century, there was a fashion for composing roundels, ballades and triolets after French models, and very pretty some of these were ; but it was a fashion that passed : it took no hold. Of all these set forms the sonnet alone has been thoroughly acclimatized in England ; and, indeed, many of our very finest poems are in the sonnet-form. From the sixteenth century to the twentieth it has flourished abundantly. . . .

The English genius, with its instinctive passion for freedom, is impatient of rules and set patterns ; and no sooner was the sonnet introduced into England than our poets began making variations on the Italian pattern. One only of these variations has survived as an alternative and independent form, the quiet distinct form adopted by Shakespeare, with its three quatrains clinched by a concluding couplet. Both forms have triumphantly justified themselves. But in between them we find variations which sometimes may have been conscious attempts to improve on the Italian pattern, but, I think, more often are due to laziness, and impatience at the necessity of finding so many rhymes as are required. The fact remains that the strict form is the most successful. . . .

The song is the simplest form of lyric. It is the purest and most immediate expression of the impulse which is fundamental in all forms of art and is allied to the dance. I think we should all agree that a song suggests something that seems to sing itself, something that we feel was made for music or has such music in itself that it does not need the enhancement of actual notes. A certain brevity then seems essential, or rather singleness and simplicity of motive. . . . We recognize at once the singing voice.

In longer lyrics which have this singing movement, yet which we should not naturally call songs, we find that there is a certain complexity ; the movement changes, a fresh theme starts. A song, too long drawn out, tires the ear and fails of its proper effect. But the single

motive or idea may be caressed and repeated. . . . If too long continued, repetition has a weakening, a sort of drowsing effect; but up to a certain point it has a very strong effect. In a composition so short as a song, it is bound to have a strong effect; and so we find it instinctively used by poets. Hence arises the use of the refrain.

It is of course in the ballads, of which we have so magnificent a store, that the refrain is oftenest employed. The peculiar value of repetition and refrain are eminently seen in one of the greatest of all these ballads, *Edward, Edward.* It is like strokes of a hammer driving the tragedy of the situation into the mind with repeated blows. It makes for intensity as nothing else could do. . . .

In the second great flowering time of our poetry in the age of the Romantic Revival it is the larger lyric which triumphs. The seventeenth century shows already the effect of a changed mental atmosphere and the infusion of a new complexity. This new phase of the lyric was heralded by Donne, who, although an Elizabethan in actual date, seems in temper to belong to a later generation. In his verse a vivid sensuality conflicts with a passionate spirituality. But what especially distinguishes this new phase is the research for curious thoughts and images, for what are called conceits. And this research affects at once the character of the lyric. It is no longer the expression of a single emotion, but of emotion worked upon by thought. It becomes complex, and delights in its complexity. The intellectual element comes more to the surface. Humour is exchanged for wit. The taste for epigram and antithesis affects the mould of verse. And yet there is a high temper in life itself. . . .

The temperate climate of the eighteenth century was not very propitious to the lyric vein, though by exception Burns and Blake wrote some of the most beautiful songs in English; nor must we forget Christopher Smart and Chatterton. Much more typical of the period are the Odes of Gray and Collins, poems deliberately planned and elaborately carried out with a very conscious art.

But what is an ode? It is not a set form like the sonnet. Just as song merges into lyric, so lyric merges into ode. In neither case is there a defined boundary; and yet there are certain poems which we could not call by any other name than that of ode. We can best approach the question by asking what it is that impels a poet to cast his thought and feeling into this form. It is, I think, a sort of exaltation which transcends personal emotion and corresponds rather to that instinct which impels us, on certain high occasions, to embody the emotions of a group, it may be, or it may be a whole people, in a complex ceremonial. We do not always remember that ceremony is one of the arts; a great art and one in which we English, I think, have often excelled. The ode, then, we may say, is the lyric at its most complex and exalted, a public rather than a private utterance, and having in its most developed form a sort of orchestral character. If the song reminds us of the dancing movement of a rippling brook, the movement of the ode resembles

rather the more gradual, swelling, and majestic roll of the sea waves. But having said that, I become aware at once of a number of poems called odes which fail to correspond, in one respect or another, with such a description. . . .

In recent years there has been a growing movement in favour of the public speaking of poetry. Having had a good deal of experience of this art, I can testify that it supplies a sort of automatic criticism of the poems spoken ; it is a test which shows up defects and weaknesses and at the same time discloses unsuspected beauties. There has been also a very interesting development of choric speaking. Now if poets were to compose with a view to such performances, I think it might infuse into the ode a new vitality. Occasions of ceremony might be enhanced by poetry.

Of all English odes perhaps the nearest to Pindar, not indeed in form but in spirit, is Tennyson's *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* ; for this honours a great man, it has a national and commemorative character, and its solemn movement rising out of grief to exultation, suggests a funeral march. . . .

Apart from Blake, the poets of the eighteenth century confined themselves to a small range of metres, and showed no zest of exploration in the way of rhythm. But by the time of the death of Byron a wonderful transformation had taken place. It was of course inevitable that with the change of mood produced by the Romantic movement new modes of expression should be employed. But the great expansion of rhythms and invention of new metrical forms owes its chief debt to the lyrical genius of Shelley ; to Coleridge also in a less degree. . . . To-day, there is a return to metre, or a kind of metre, though there has been a loosening of the forms of verse such as would have outraged the critics of fifty years ago. The forms have changed with the themes. And who can wonder at this ? There is no technical innovation in the arts which has any enduring effect, except in response to a change in the mood of the time. And what uprooting, what shattering changes have we not witnessed and taken part in, during one generation ! The change of mood can be seen in the work of a single poet, W. B. Yeats, himself among the subtlest of lyrical artists. Reality is preferred to romance ; the hard to the soft ; the rough to the smooth ; the bitter to the sweet. Such revulsions were bound to come.

### RUDYARD KIPLING AND HENRY AINLEY

MR. ROLAND PERTWEE, presiding at the enormously appreciated reading of Kipling by Henry Ainley, whose last of several notable appearances for The Poetry Society was at the Byron Centenary meeting, told the overflowing audience that " Kipling came to me as a stranger out of the night. I took him in and gave him lodging, and for so long as there is breath in my body he shall occupy a freehold in my heart. What he has said and written rings in my memory like a bell that time can never crack. For he it was who first sounded in my

ears the carillon of patriotism which to-day is the main-spring of all that is best and truest in this Island race.

" Oddly enough, the first trepidant effort of my pen was a dramatisation of his story, *The Return of Imray*, which, when completed was entrusted to an envelope addressed, and I would ask you to believe what a thrill that addressing gave me, to Rudyard Kipling, Esquire, Burwash, Sussex. To say that I expected an acknowledgment would be to claim an optimism which, at the time, I did not possess. For, in common with the youth of the period, I did not really believe in miracles. Yet, within a week, the play was returned bearing, in the Master's hand, three minor alterations and, which was even more amazing, a letter stating that he had instructed his agent to draw up a contract between us on a basis of fifty-fifty in the event of the play being produced.

" I shall always remember that half sheet letter which bore alongside the address, three agreeable devices, severally, a small railway engine, a telegraph pole and a telephone with appropriate information attached.

" It would be pleasant to be able to tell you that London managers fought for the rights of this play and that, between us, we cleared up a packet. Such, however, was not the case. The play was produced, but by me, and with me in the leading part, at a matinée of four one-act plays by my pen given at the Court Theatre in 1913. And, looking up old records, I find that the expenses of this matinée amounted to seventy-five pounds, and the receipts to seventy-three pounds ten shillings. It proved, however, the slipway upon which my dubious successes as a writer were launched.

" I had always hoped, through that happy postal contact with Kipling, that I might have met him as, in the beaten way of travel, I have met most of the writing fraternity of this age. But, although I assiduously lunched at the Beefsteak Club for a number of years, never once did I succeed in synchronizing my presence with his. Indeed, I saw him in the flesh but once, and that at Brown's Hotel where he was in some concern over a missing suitcase and did not utter one word to prove the poetry and the inspiration which in him lay.

" It has been written that a man's reach should exceed his grasp or what's a heaven for, and my immortal soul may have suffered a gain in a loss which fell upon this nation, so to speak, in the slipstream of another loss when a crowned head put the love of a woman before Empire. In the maelstrom of national emotion which followed that catastrophe, there was buried a man who, to my thinking, put Empire before God himself and whose creed of duty and of service was as wholesome a religion as any that I, for one, have ever encountered.

" There are to me certain persons and things which, even when dead, can never die. Sometimes they are but little spots of light twinkling over the horizon of memory, and sometimes blinding brilliancies whose fires are as everlasting as the sun. Of the latter, Kipling was, and is,

the shining example—the beacon that never failed to lead a traveller to a better goal than any of his own devising.

" This is to me a nostalgic occasion for, out of that past in which I found my Kipling, and, indeed, belonging to the same period, steps another happy inclusion in the company of my younger heroes whose memory will never diminish, Henry Ainley. Our time of friendship found its genesis just before the last war when he and I, tipping the beam at a slightly less onerous figure, shared a companionship which I shall always cherish.

" As a young man who might have stepped from a canvas by Da Vinci, the world mistakenly regarded Ainley as an Olympian. It is with joy that I seek to explode that myth and to present him to you now as he was then, a jesting, care-free fellow of a kind which, in the later years of life, we do not often enough meet upon the highway. I can recall long walks and talks with him—talks begun at midnight burning ever to mid-day when we made up fresh adventures for the morrow. And some of these, being of an out-spoken character, were not always easy to conduct. For he would come to my mother's house on the North Downs—a modern house, but so wilfully resolute to present a Tudor aspect that the flooring of the rooms above did but serve as a percolator for the conversation in the rooms below. On this account many of the things of which we had need to speak we were compelled to utter pianissimo least an old generation might be disturbed by the extravagance and profanities of a younger.

" In this affair of quietude I was able to produce happier results than Harry, whose voice was of a kind to pierce the walls of a castle. It is still of that kind, as I learned the other night when its radiant cadences were speaking in praise of ' Jasmine ' over the radio. I have never ceased to wonder at that voice of Harry's which is compounded of sunshine and honey and the free winds that blow across Ilkley moor. How he came by it I cannot imagine, but can only suspect that his mother must have been frightened by the great organ in the cathedral at Chartres some while before he was born."

### The Connection between Music and Poetry

Mr. Charles Kennedy Scott, the musician and professor of singing and conductor of the Oriana Madrigal Society, etc., presiding at Miss Kathleen Cooper's Poetry and Music matinée, said :

The detail of a musical phrase is not to be compared with that of a verbal one for interest and expressive power. At the very moment, roughly the date 1600, when instrumental music broke away from vocal music, we see signs of certain deteriorations in both music and poetry. It would generally be conceded that the Elizabethan lyric, which like all lyrics up to then was " made for music," represented the high water mark in this particular form of poetic utterance ; while the ill fused amalgams of emancipated verse with instrumental music which in the main have done duty as songs since that period

show a far lower order of rhythmic organization than was prevalent in earlier times, not only in songs but in music as a whole.

But there are deeper grounds than those of form for insisting upon a close working alliance between music and poetry : the grounds of sense and meaning. It is fatally easy for music to lose sense, to become mere sound and fury, pleasant or hideous, according to the musical talent of the composer, but withal scarcely linking up with the human heart in any adequate or profound way—is the same not true of poetry also when the music of words is set aside ? Such music satisfies neither the call of beauty nor humanity. It is just so much stuff and nonsense when judged by the realities of ordinary life, or by anything, in fact, about which we feel strongly. One of the most disquieting features of the times is the lowering of verbal values in ordinary speech, the absence from it of poetry and passion. A language of practicality has more or less displaced the language of sentiment. We follow this degeneration in what does duty for popular song at the present day, where surely the bedrock of verbal inanity has been reached. Musically such song amounts to nothing. But, this is the point, this music goes to words of drivelling stupidity ; hence the music is also drivel. How could it be otherwise ? Doggerel words mean doggerel rhythm. When they rule the roost formal qualities deteriorate. And since high thought cannot be expressed in low form, spiritual penetration and perception fades ; vulgarity, in its worst sense, ensues. But fine words: the lines of the Bible, the liturgy or other great literary documents (even if they are not actually associated with music, but are current coin in the minds of people) act as a continual challenge to the musician. The " thought " of music is checked, evaluated by poetic thought. Musical mentality is not a thing apart. It is just an aspect of a general way of life, partaking of the nature of all human culture, reflecting all its standards. It cannot, with any degree of perfection, exist in a watertight compartment. We neglect poetry ultimately at the expense of all the arts, but particularly the art of music, because in very breath music and poetry are the brother and the sister, in body and soul.

He was glad thus to be taking a humble if momentary part in the activities of the Society ; for, even as a musician, he felt how valuable those activities were. Poetry was none other than the essence of perception, and therefore a chief means of understanding the mystery, significance and grandeur of life. As this particular meeting was devoted to music and poetry, he asked to be permitted to make one point concerning the relation between the two arts. It seemed to him important. It was that of the ultimate dependence of music upon poetry, music became a self-sufficient thing at its peril.

The close connection between music and poetry had been a matter of age-long comment and analysis. The beautiful sonnet of the Elizabethan Richard Barnfield beginning

" If music and sweet poetry agree

As they needs must, the sister and the brother : "
dwelt upon it ; and the formal and spiritual correspondence of music and poetry has resulted, practically, in innumerable songs.

But the matter, he thought, went further than that. It was not only that music and poetry *could* go hand in hand, but that such an alliance, or, at any rate, such an influence as poetry can exert was necessary to music of the highest levels of musical art were to be reached and retained. And even though words might not be actually used with music, the verbal test could not be dispensed with.

Dante maintained that the perfect song was the poem set to music ; that music and poetry were incomplete taken separately. He, and his contemporaries, did not admit a lyric without music, nor a song without words. The costs, however, have been so developed, that this perhaps can no longer be said to be as true as it was in Dante's time. Nevertheless it seems clear that both music and poetry lose something of their lyrical significance if they were divorced from each other and follow paths of their own. Then the music of words tends to disappear, particularly as regards accent and rhythm (which are part of musical expression) ; and verbal felicities of sound which are undoubtedly carried over into notes are abandoned in favour of rougher musical methods. Let it not be imagined that music is necessarily more physically sensitive and spiritually suggestive than poetry, that it is so by its very make up ; or that notes as such are more subtle than syllables. In certain aspects of its organization a verbal phrase is greatly the superior of a musical one, through its nervous, varied use of consonant and vowel.

Monica Pritchett is inspired by Listening to Browning at The Poetry Society Matinée on Friday, May 31st, 1941 :

When I sat listening to Browning
In war-time London,
On a grey Friday—but the trees were green—
Then hearing the joy of his verse,
I thought only of that great poetry,
And war faded :
And in the pauses between the poems
I saw no instrument of war,
Nor war relic,
But only a green vase with yellow irises,
Such a vase
And such flowers
As he might have written about
Had he seen them.

And I knew
That Browning was being read

Where he should be read,
In that scarred square of the city
He must remember most ;
Where his love of life is now
Though unintentionally, so appropriate
In a place where life
Can be lost so easily ;
There, so near to us all,
Just down the road from the square
Wimpole Street stretches
Up and down,
Where Browning, the young Browning,
Had waited for Elizabeth,
In the old street,
With a wary eye for Papa.

And when I listened
To " Love Among the Ruins " and " Prospice "
(Which are my favourites)
I wondered if he had come
Up the road from Wimpole Street,
And was listening, silently,
Outside the window—
Listening to his own poetry
Read in that room of books
Where the young irises and the old volumes
Lived together.

And all these things
Flashed through my mind
As I sat, listening to Browning
On that London Friday.

## A REPLY TO MR. McFADDEN'S *TO-MORROW*

There is no cause for sorrow :
Ten thousands, tortured now, will die to-morrow—
But snowdrops on their grave will greet the spring.

The world is in confusion—
But wickedness and grief are an illusion :
Surely reality's a pleasant thing ?

To a gallows nailed again
By me, One writhes with other people's pain—
Forget it, brother, and of Easter sing.

The Athenaeum, S.W.1. PATRICK STEVENSON.

## THE IVY

THE ruined coach-house overlaid,
With clouds of ivy now is gone
That through the changing seasons made
Fair evergreen to gaze upon;
Men hacked it down, and with it hurled
To death how various a world!

No more the thrush and blackbird there
Shall feast on berries purple-black,
When snow yet illustrates the year
And other food their larders lack,
Then, having wetted well their throats,
Ruffle their wings and try their notes;

There not again, in joyous May,
Shall they bring dewy moss for nest,
Fibre and whatnot, straw and clay,
And round the circle with their breast,
Then from the ivy's topmost crown
Bugle the golden sunset down.

And there no more, in hot July,
Shall parent sparrows to and fro
For juicy morsels, grub and fly,
Down the sun-warm galleries go,
The lazy groundling young to feed,
Whose chirps repeat the tale of greed.

There bees shall congregate no more
About the umbels of late bloom,
Sticky with moisture, that upbore
Green stars above the leafy gloom
Where, deep withdrawn, the spider's lust
Lurked in cobwebs roped with dust.

There has the barn-owl lost his perch
Where he, profaning with no hoot
The hush as of an empty church,

Would, like an angler taking root
Beside a willowy river-brink,
A feathered statue, watch, nor wink;

No need of line or bait to throw—
Into the stream of night would pierce
Those orbs with golden flame aglow;
No need of hook—those talons fierce,
Like lightning with no thunder heard,
Would strike on rustle of mouse or bird.

No more; and never more for me
That patterning of glossy-green,
Five-pointed, dark embroidery
Shall hold in miniature the scene
Where Life betrays her sweets and stings
By trembling leaves and whirring wings.

Nor only is the outward sense
Cheated; from this lost ivy's bower
Would Fancy often fly far hence
To lonely lake and battled tower,
Where ruined keep and ivied wall
Have greybeard Time for seneschal.

G. Rostrevor Hamilton.

## "WHICH PASSETH UNDERSTANDING"

THIS morning I have seen
The Peace of God. I saw it in the green
And tranquil silence of the wooded hill;
Silence complete and rare,
Angels might enter there
With folded wings. The stilly air a hush
Of latent music over tree and bush,
Trembling to breathe a prayer,
Yet fearful movement there
Might break the spell, and even music spill
The tranquil silence of the wooded hill.

Edith Franklin Parker.

## ELIZABETH TO CHURCHILL

1588—1941

A BRAVE and valiant people looked to him
In this dark hour in this, his Island Home.
As Churchill watched the enemy's advance
And evening shadows hid God's steady stars,
Grey wings of death hurled horror from the clouds
That hung so innocently far above
This land he loved beyond all else, this England!
A year of struggle and of sacrifice,
A year of heroism and of pain;
Destruction of men's homes and God's cathedrals,
A wanton waste of human life and treasure,
All this had been endured, the end not yet.
Too well he knew the sad and shameful price
Triumphant Germany would ask of Britain.
(If peace could come, the peace of long-gone days
That seemed in retrospect like children's dreams,)
But peace that might be offered now, a peace
That meant surrender, slavery, and worse,
To call such life as that a peace destroyed
The meaning of the word; and yet, and yet,
How much could any people bear—and live?

From out the shadows, shadows of the soul
And shadows of the all-enfolding night,
Unlit by stars, there came to him a voice,
A woman's voice across three centuries:
"I, too, once faced a ruthless enemy;
My heart was wrung with anguish for the woe
That might descend upon my people here
When Spanish Philip seemed 'invincible.'
And I loved England more than anything,
Than crown, or lover, or immortal soul.
She is my child; I left her to the world
To be a light in darkness, sanctuary
For all free men who love their freedom more
Than treasure, safety, even life itself.
You, too, love England more than anything.
Do not forget, in this heart-breaking hour,

The Soul of England is invincible,
Her light will not be quenched, her spirit broken,
For it is fed by bones and blood of heroes,
And their high valour through a thousand years!
And God alone controls Earth, Sea, and Air!"

Washington, D.C. ALETHEA TODD ALDERSON.

## HOUR OF PEACE

BECAUSE this hour has wings,
All lovely things
More lovely are to me;
The flower, the tree
Full of soft whisperings,
Murmur of bee,
And tiny forms that pass
Amid the grass.
Grey stone where green moss clings,
Birds flying free.
Because this hour has wings,
All lovely things
More lovely are to me.

GRACE DOROTHY REEVES.

## THE LAKE

THE fitful wind with nimble fingers knits
Intricate patterns in a skein of sky,
And to the lake's too subtle sheet commits
His scribbled hieroglyphs to cheat the eye
Which, as it looks, encounters with amaze
But moveless waters' bland, untroubled gaze.

Ephemeral the fame of man and brief
Upon the waters of the world his breath:
Time must smooth out the burden of his grief,
Quell all life's turbulence unfailing death. . . .
Let each his mind into a mirror make,
Still as the surface of a windless lake. E. CURT PETERS.

# TRADITION, ART AND ENGLAND'S GENIUS

"IT is a most un-Greek thing to imitate the Greeks!" So wrote some learned gentleman; but the learned gentleman was wrong, for at its inception Greek culture was entirely derivative.[1] When the Dorians came down to the shores of the Middle Sea they brought little with them. They found others already in possession with agriculture, stone building, the wheel, writing, and the worship of the gods; and they took over much of what they found. The earliest known Greek statue, found in Ionia, is imitation Egyptian, pure and simple—bobbed hair, square shoulders, one foot before the other, and all. The general plan of their temples is to be found at Kahnak. We know now that the processional sculpture of the Hittites is behind the frieze of the Parthenon. Even their dress the "kiton" was Punic as was also their alphabet.

The Greeks did not create their culture by some process akin to spontaneous combustion. Like all good artists they seized upon the traditions of their time and place, and reshaped them in terms of their own need and temper. The result was something that was "modern" enough in its day and has permanent value.

The continuity of all human culture is of course obvious; but it is because so many writers of our time chose to ignore this obvious thing that we have landed in our present muddle. Most of them seem to have fallen under a sort of school-teacher's theory of history, dividing it into neat little chunks, each with a label of its own—Mediaeval, Renaissance and the rest of them—and each utterly isolated from all the others. The people who live in the compartments thus formed are supposed to produce an independent culture which is strictly "contemporaneous." This theory we owe to the Germans, especially Mr. Spengler; and like most of the stuff that comes from that quarter it is largely bunk! It is unscientific because it is in flagrant conflict with historical and antiquarian fact.

[1] This is not the place for antiquarian discussion but Breasted's admirable series of diagrams are enough to convince most.

Nevertheless its influence is now spread far and wide. Recently Mr. Auden announced that the Renaissance is dead and done with. It is not so. In point of fact " Renaissance " is only a name which certain modern people have given to a phase of human activity, the consequence of which will continue to be felt as long as men inhabit this planet ; for the effect of all human action is without end.

True enough some political and cultural persons are trying to destroy the result of the Renaissance. They wish poets to return to the " colloquial speech " of the late Mr. Dante Alighieri, and the rest of mankind to the no doubt equally colloquial politics and savagery of Dante's Holy Roman Imperium. They will fail. That which is done may not be undone.

For some reason it has become fashionable to call the literary side of this movement " modernism." It would be more honest to give it its proper name which is " obscurantism."

It is impossible to isolate any " movement " in time ; and historians of the future will probably trace the beginnings of these contemporary goings-on—at least in part—to the day when the cry " Back to the Middle Ages ! "[2] first went up from Horace Walpole's Gothic mansion on Strawberry Hill. For the time being the " modernists " seem to be unconscious of their high ancestry.

Meanwhile, true to their Spenglerian principles, they are trying to create a culture in vacuo as it were, by spontaneous generation. They are the literary champions of special creation opposing evolution. But that too must fail, for all artists must have some sort of tradition from which to draw their cultural capital. They have only succeeded in abandoning the English tradition to allow another to creep into its place, for nature abhors a vacuum.

And what is this new tradition which they—unconsciously or not—have chosen to import ? There can, I think, be little doubt about it. Apart from the influence of Strawberry Hill, our more fashionable sort of culture is rooted in

[2] There were, of course, both good and bad mediaevalists. The good ones gave us William Morris and Co. The bad are responsible for our modern horrors.

the philosophic school of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, father of abominations and lies. Roughly speaking your Fichtean regards the objective world as a mere emanation of his own ego, whatever one's ego may be. He rejects reason in favour of instinct and blind impulse. When painters and poets become sealed of the tribe, their work ceases to have any apparent sense, for they no longer create for an audience but only for themselves. People in their condition prefer to sit tight, expressing their egos as vigorously as circumstances will permit, while hoping for the best. This is just what the futurists, the dadaists, the firm of Stein and Joyce, and all those whom we may legitimately lump together as modernists, have been trying to do for the last twenty years.

The influence of this school of cerebration—one may not dignify it by calling it thought—upon those who have sponsored these movements in England is patent. Here is one of them. Having accused the "ordinary man" of repressed homo-sexuality, all-pervasive eroticism, unconscious sadism, mass self-deception and Lord-knows-what-else, he announces that it is the main business of the artist to protest against him and put him in his place. Thus the artist becomes a sort of Nietzschean superman in top-boots, whose main business is kicking ordinary folk in the pants. Yet worse is to come. Here it is. The same gentleman believes "that no one whose blood is not coeval and congenital with the language he uses ever attains the last perfection in poetic expression."[3] This is Hitlerism as well as being thoroughly bad biology and ethnology; and both Nietzsche and Hitler were the spiritual children of Fichte.

Psycho-analysis looks to me uncommonly like an attempt to bring Fichtean unreason to bear upon the problems of human behaviour. Long before Freud was on his way into the world men have known that the sexual instinct was important, and when repressed would colour conduct in manifold ways; so the old gentleman cannot claim this as an original idea. That is not Freudism. Rather should we

[3] Calderon was a man of Mediterranean race, yet he used a form of Latin which since it belongs to the Aryan group was an importation into the Mediterranean area. Was he a bad poet?

say that the core of his doctrine is this : we all come into the world with a congenital apparatus called the Unconscious, stored with a stock of innate symbols, each having an exclusively sexual significance. Now students of life tell us that the nature of the apparatus which we bring into this world is determined by substances called " genes." Is there a gene of the Unconscious ? Does each symbol have a gene of its own ; or does one gene do duty for a number of symbols ? With each succeeding generation a proportion of genes are eliminated. Are the Unconscious and symbolic genes weeded out in this way ? Like Miss Dartle one may only ask for information. Freud's other central doctrine that we are unconsciously conscious of the crimes of remote ancestors implies that our genes remember the histories of the bodies in which they were previously domiciled ; although there is no communication between the brain which is the seat of memory and the germ-plasm where our genes have their abode. In all humility one cannot help thinking that the Freudians have tumbled into a biological and anatomical morass, and cannot get out !

At any rate the whole tradition of England is opposed to Fichtean folly. It assumes the existence of an objective world, and that truth can be attained by the use of reason. It is not for nothing that Newton the father of scientific method and clear thinking was an Englishman.

Our country's attitude to the sciences and arts—muddled and Philistine as it has often become—is sound at heart. Man is a social being. The artist is a man, so his work must have *some* sort of social import. He need not give the public what it wants ; but he must give *something*. He must work for others. " Art for art's sake " is in the widest sense of the word immoral.

The doctrine which holds that politics and art should be subordinate to morals is very old ; and has little to do with that bundle of seventeenth-century theologies known as Puritan. We find the germ in the teaching of Aristotle.

All art, good or bad, fulfils some social function ; and when it ceases to do this it is no longer art. The writing, paintings, and sculpture of the great oriental empires in

antiquity aimed at the glorification of sacred kings, who as irrigation engineers and medicine men were as keystones in the arches upholding the fabric of civil things. The Parthenon has nothing to do with clap-trap about " forms in space." It is a bribe offered to Pallas, with an eye to those moral and material blessings which she might deign to bestow on the citizens of Athens by way of acknowledgement. The chief function of the portrait painter is to maintain family tradition and civic pride. Popular art aims at leading simple folk to relaxation and pleasure.[1] The English attitude to the arts is therefore fundamentally right, because it is scientific being in accord with the facts in the life around us. It is really the attitude of all sensible men.

The modernist lot boast of their adherence to the " continental school " of art ; but it is a continent that has long been culturally enslaved by Germany. Alas ! the futurists, the dadaists, and the rest of them were but the forerunners of Hitler's tanks : the first triumph of barbarian unreason in the land of Abelard and Voltaire.

And now our Newtonian island remains the last refuge of reason and right living in the West. Embattled and at war, she faces a mainland given over to frenzied Fichteans engaged in giving full rein to all their instincts and emotions in the manner prescribed by the equally frenzied Freudians ; with the result that their neuroses and psychoses grow worse and worse, never attaining that cure which this sort of conduct is supposed to entail. So let us return to our national tradition and national good sense. A new civilization has to be built and the task will be hard and long. In the dark days that are to come, whether in peace or war, the world will have little use for " artists " who since their sole interest is centred in hawking their egos around, are useless to themselves, to their country and mankind.

WALTER BURTON.

[1] For some reason it has become fashionable to condemn the whole literature of entertainment as " escape." Well, " escape " is an intellectual holiday, and holidays are beneficial to both body and brain. If the highbrows escaped a little more often they might use their brains a little better, and do some original thinking instead of leaving it all to Marx and Freud.

# OCTOBER'S CHILD

I WATCH the stack tilt on the garth fulfill'd,
rooks in the stubble, rooks appeas'd fly home,
the burst sack drip till half its gold is spill'd,
the swathe uncut from whence the lithe hares come,
and know the secret worth of being born
when the full can brims up its purple foam,
and cluster'd haws weigh down the splinter'd thorn.

I came in the full ripeness of the year.
My mother held me from the lamb's first bleat,
past bluebell days and blossoming of pear,
through sultry noons of rose and meadowsweet,
over the ridge of summer till she came
weary to gaze upon the ample wheat
kindled with poppies to a sudden flame.

Then when men's harvests fill'd the motey barn,
and hope rejoicing blest the laden ark,
she brought me whimpering in a twilit morn
to follow candles in the crowding dark
and nurst me warm when time was dumb with snow,
and rockt me quiet when the trees were stark
that woke when I began a year ago.

So, tho' I love the seasons in their turn
for sake of her that bore me glad thro' each,
when the heapt leaves are swept and set to burn
I touch a magic deeper than my speech :
there is a strength and richness and an end
no other season's fledglings ever reach.
The year's fulfilment knows them not as friend.

My child, if I should ever father one,
let it be born at stripping of the tree,
in mellow warmth of an october sun
in well till'd quarter of this north country,
and let the full year tincture every thought,
not summer's pride or spring's green urgency
but careful harvest to completion brought.

Belfast. JOHN HEWITT.

## AN OPEN LETTER TO WALTER OF THE R.A.F.

THERE is not time for me to say the things
That I should like to say. Time brings
With it a sense of many things undone
And we must change the course we shaped to run
Through life. Ah, yes, I know the plans we laid :
I was to be a surgeon, you were made
For aviation and the wide blue sky.
You always said that when you were to die
You wanted it to come in one swift flash.
The fates had heard your wishes, what a crash
You must have made when you went down, my Walter,
You lived the dream that you had dreamt, and " falter "
Was not a word that you had ever known.
The sky was cherry-red where you had flown
And whining engines were your dying song.
It was fitting, for to men of steel belong
The music of their elements. But look,
You made me wander from the path I took
When I began to write. Well, let it go !
I have become a surgeon of words, you know,
Instead of a patcher of flesh. That was my fall ;
So excuse my vagaries. I went to call
Upon your parents when the sad news came.
Your mother was heroic, she did not blame
A soul for what was past, she wept a bit
And said, " He died as he'd have wanted it."
Your dad stood by the window, looking out
Upon the yard where once you used to shout
And so my mind went back to other days
When you and I were younger, and the haze
Of lofty ideals was about us both.
You were both big and strong, but I was loth
To spread the gospel to the stupid louts.
Not so with you, you always welcomed bouts.
I can hear you now, your voice quite clear,
Telling them that brotherhood was near,
That love would conquer, and the weak would rise.
But I would see derision in their eyes

And say to you, " Why cast your pearls to swine ? "
" They're universal pearls," you'd say, " not mine—
And there shall come a time when one shall eat,
Then two, then three, and then the sound of feet
Will rise crescendo, and the hungry folk
Will come in waves ; then justice, not the yoke
Shall rule upon the earth." They called you dumb,
And you were,—like Lincoln, who had come,
And fought, and died for those self-same ideals.
And now once more time's heavy moving wheels
Had brought us to the point where pride and greed
And selfish men were tearing down the creed
That haloed hosts had built. And still the fools :
" Why should it matter who it is that rules,"
They said, " we aren't the ones to be concerned."
But you, you knew when evil had returned
That it would grow and spread about the earth,
And freedom would be crushed, and love, and mirth,
And all the peaceful virtues of our times.
And slavery would come, with blood and crimes
Unspeakable. And when you looked across
The ocean where others fought against the loss
Of liberty, you knew it was your fight.
And off you went one calm and lovely night ;
I shall remember what you said to me
Always, before you sailed across the sea.
You said, " It's not for us, but all the others
Who shall come after us, the men and mothers
A thousand years from now who will be born
Into a world where none shall ever mourn
That they were not of another race or nation."
And in that time I know you'll walk with proud elation.

Provo, Utah. ARTHUR KREISMAN.

MRS. MARY ATHEY (Cobham) : I have pleasure in enclosing cheque £1 1s. as my subscription to The Poetry Society for the current year. I trust that the plea for increased subscriptions will meet with a good response, that poetry may continue to flourish, for never has the need been greater for that vision without which we perish.

# THE DECLINE OF IRISH POETRY

THE dominant figure in modern Irish poetry is William Butler Yeats, whose work, broadly speaking, falls into two sections. The earlier has freshness and occasionally power: but the later comes from a matured intellect, and has rhythms more varied and intricate. Two typical stanzas taken respectively from *Sailing To Byzantium* and *The Tower* show the utter fallacy of the belief that his old age brought a falling-off of his powers :—

*An aged man is but a paltry thing,*
*A tattered coat upon a stick, unless*
*Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing*
*For every tatter in its mortal dress,*
*Nor is there singing school but studying*
*Monuments of its own magnificence ;*
*And therefore I have sailed the seas and come*
*To the holy city of Byzantium.*

The music and vigour and subtlety of those eight lines overflow in one's mind, and show the palpable truth of his assertion :—

*Never had I more*
*Excited, passionate, fantastical*
*Imagination, nor an ear and eye*
*That more expected the impossible—*
*No, not in boyhood when with rod and fly,*
*Or the humbler worm, I climbed Ben Bulben's back*
*And had the livelong summer day to spend.*

George William Russell (" A.E."), who was born a couple of years after Yeats, was overshadowed by the latter's strong sun of genius. Russell's poetry, like his character, has gentleness and a wistful profundity touched with a certain mystic and even prophetic strain. The opening lines of *The Mountain Wind* are typically cool, unimpassioned and tranquil.

*The cold limbs of the air*
*Brush by me on the hill,*
*Climb to the utmost crag,*
*Leap out, then all is still.*

The few poems of John Millington Synge (who was primarily a playwright) serve mainly to link up the earlier Yeats and Russell with the next group of Irish poets—Thomas MacDonagh, Seumas O'Sullivan, Padraic Pearse,

Padraic Colum and James Stephens and the youthful James Joyce. Thomas MacDonagh and Padraic Pearse were executed for their part in the Dublin Rebellion of Easter 1916. Pearse had written a fine visionary, idealistic poem, the last verse of which MacDonagh has thus translated from the Gaelic:

*I set my face*
*To the road here before me,*
*To the work that I see,*
*To the death I shall meet.*

The others were not actively interested in Irish politics, least of all James Joyce, who felt himself driven from the Dublin he never ceased to love with a lover's love: but all of them are thoroughly Irish—sometimes bitter, always disillusioned, and occasionally reaching the very highest point in lyric poetry, as Mr. Stephens does in his *Deirdre*.

*Do not let any woman read this verse;*
*It is for men, and after them their sons*
*And their sons' sons. . . .*

*But there has never been a woman born*
*Who was so beautiful, not one so beautiful*
*Of all the women born.*

*Let all the men go apart and mourn together;*
*No man can ever love her; not a man*
*Can ever be her lover.*

Joyce's actual verse, mostly contained in the *Pomes Penyeach* volume, is the least poetic of his literary work: the most poetic is very probably his autobiographical volume—*A Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man* in which may be found the seeds that developed into *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's* Wake.

But from the end of the last war to the present time, poetry in Ireland has been in decline. The star of Yeats, far from setting decently in his old age, continued to shine more fiercely than ever. He was "th' masther," and his work was the backcloth to that produced by the newer poets such as F. R. Higgins and Frank O'Connor. Of the two, Higgins is undoubtedly the greater poet. (Mr. O'Connor has developed into an admirable fiction writer and critic.) Higgins, in his poetry, as in his personal appear-

ance and manner, modelled himself on the " sixty year old smiling public man" as Yeats had come to describe himself. (See *Among School Children.*) F. R. Higgins' final volume of poems—he died an untimely death a few months ago—*The Gap of Brightness*, published a year ago, shows him at the peak of his development. The first two stanzas from his poem, *The Three-Cornered Field*, are typical :—

*By a field of the crab-trees my love and I were walking*
*And talking most sweetly to each other ;*
*In the three-cornered field we walked in early autumn,*
*And these were the words of my lover :*

*"A poor scholar like I who never took to girling*
*Finds book-knowledge such a bitter morsel—*
*Yet were I a clergyman, wise in holy learning,*
*O I'd make your wild beauty my gospel."*

More recently, Irish poetry has turned to the black, alien, materialistic, northern province of Ulster for fire and direction. The chief living poet from Ulster—my own province—is, of course, Mr. Louis MacNeice, who is generally associated with the Auden-Spender-Lewis " Pylon " School of the 'Thirties : but even life-long residence in England has not checked some of his essentially Irish characteristics. Since the outbreak of war another Ulsterman has come to the front,—Mr.W. R. Rodgers—who has been acclaimed by Mr. Cyril Connolly of *Horizon.* Among other North Irish poets should be named Messrs. John Irvine (not to be confused with another Ulsterman, St. John Ervine) and John Hewitt whose work may be called post-Georgian.

At present a group of Belfast poets is growing to maturity, of which I myself am one. It is too premature yet to say what direction we shall take, and what the dominating trends will eventually be. Names could scarcely be mentioned in this article, since little of our work has appeared before the English public. An exception is Mr. Maurice James Craig, who has just returned from Cambridge. Typical examples of his poetry have appeared in the Hogarth Press selection,—*Poets Of To-morrow.*

Yet, despite this apparent poetic activity in Ireland, I cannot help feeling that during the past couple of decades the Irish poets have very often missed the boat (not the

boat to England, though !). May I close by quoting from what I wrote in *The Irish Times* of last July 11th :

But what is the explanation of this growth of poetic impotence and sterility ? I do not think it can be explained away by talk about Ireland's peculiar position in modern Europe, or by giving accounts of the tide of cheap, foreign, literary merchandise that floods the mentality of our youth. The only explanation that one can offer—and even it is unsatisfying—is that the past few generations have built and cemented too firmly a wall of exclusive, in-looking, " nationalistic " nationalism. . . . Clique-writing about Cathleen Ni Houlihan and Brian Boru, like the private allusions of the minor members of the English " Pylon " School of the 'Thirties, will leave little or no impression on the wider world of letters, when there is the urgent necessity for the re-affirmation and the re-assessment of the elemental, human values that are being trampled on by bomb and bayonet.

Belfast, August 4th, 1941. ROBERT GREACEN.

## NONE WAKE YOU

DEAREST of all my friends, goodbye,
Sleep take you.
You will but lie
Quiet for ever while the centuries tread
With ringing step across your fading head,

Till you are dust again, and none
Remake you.
But still pass on
The glow of wisdom and the glint of mirth
That went with you about the heavy earth.

Glorious as truth it is to find
None wake you.
Your lustrous mind
Burns its bright flame in minds of other men—
And you live on who will not live again.

PHYLLIS LYTH.

## CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

*b.* Dec. 5, 1830; *d.* Dec. 29, 1894

### (An Impression)

THROUGH the smoke-grey dusk, like a flower,
Her pale hand,
Listless fanned,
The gloomed air of the still, slow hour.

As the fire stole the shortening light,
Warmly red;
Drear and dead,
Slipped the garden from feeling and sight.

While the room shrunk and flamed, hollowed, shone,
Shadows came
She could name
Seen through tears, slipped beyond—and were gone;

And the spring seemed so far—other springs,
Dreams and flowers,
Songs and showers,
Seemed but dust or the beat of dead wings.

Oh the ice and the gloom: oh the years
Swiftly gone,
Yearned she on
Sunlit slopes, bloom-shot grapes, shining meres.

To the soul winter struck like a knife,
But more keen
Though unseen
The frustration and innermost strife.

And her tears slowly welled and dropped down,
On her hands
Like wet strands;
Shone they clear, cold as grief on her gown.

Through the dusk, through the chill, through the gloom
Came a sound
Silvery, round,
Bubble-like, twinkling, tossed in the room.

Oh the robin may sing in the spring
But more dear
Seems he here
When the frost flakes white flowers on his wing.

As the sounds died away she was still,
In her blood,
Like bud,
Stirred there thoughts that her words must fulfil,

And from thorns and from briars and rue
As she wrought
Each sharp thought
Broke in budding and blossoming blue.

Her pale hand traced the words, scarce could she
See to write,
For the light,
Slipping fast from the night seemed to flee.

But her words shone like fire pure and pale;
Shine they still,
Light and fill,
In the darkness the shadows of the Vale.

ELLODE COLLINS.

## THE ORDINARY LISTENER

WHAT shall we do, stumblers
Who clutch at the skirts of Music?
What shall we do, untalented,
Groping after joys too high for us?
Who now will open for us the door to the great ones?
Our guide is gone from us
And all the daughters of music are brought low.

D. E. C. TOMLIN.

## EXTREMES MEET

(*A Pen-Sketch on the Occasion of a Wedding Anniversary*)

HE is methodical,
Very—
And meticulous about details,
Too meticulous sometimes—
For he revels in order
And its finite achievement.
Experiment is, to him,
A dangerous impertinence—
The reflection of a resentful ignorance.
His landscapes are photographic—
Every leaf clearly defined,
And cloud melting into cloud.

*She*, more or less, throws her colours at the canvas—
Sometimes disastrously,
Often effectively—
For she revels in chaos
And its infinite possibility.
She smiles on Failure,
And often frowns on Success—
The first, she describes as a Roman Road
Leading straight to Progress,
And the second, a By-Pass
Missing the Golden City.

To *Him*, life's signboards read :—
" Safety First," " Caution,"
" You have been warned,"
And " Trespassers will be prosecuted "—
But *She* sees only the Green lights of " Go,"
Regardless of " Danger ahead,"
And no lane is " Impassable for Motorists."

*Her* mind is as eagerly receptive
As the open beaks of nestlings
Waiting to be fed,
And almost as insatiate—
But *His*, equally alert,

And considerably more cautious,
Is reminiscent of the parent-bird
Guarding the tree,
When marauding feet
Come too near the nest.

*He* has analysed the philosophy of Socrates,
Plato, Aristotle,
And quotes them with due reverence.
Contemporary Polar expeditions,
And attempts on Everest,
Leave him unmoved,
But he follows with rare enthusiasm
The discoveries of the excavator's spade—
*She* delights in the green expectancy
Of young larch,
And glories in the daring achievement
Of the autumn creeper,
But her only interest
In last year's dead leaves
Is the knowledge that leaf-mould
Stimulates an ever-richer growth.

Well, perhaps, in a way, she is right,
For *He* has become prematurely old,
And life, to him,
Is a somewhat tiresome collection
Of carefully-labelled relics—
But *She* is still questing,
And eternally young,
For life, to her,
Is a series of Adventures,
And the Greatest, she says,
Is yet to come!

*He* has studied books on Prosody,
And tried to understand
The intricacies of criticism,
Till Verse, for him,

Like Art and Music,
Has been shorn of much of its mystery,
And almost all its native joy—
But *She* once wrote a poem
(Free Verse, of course)
In praise of a common cup
Beautifully smooth to the lips,
" Because," she said, " pleasant sensations
Are often unexpressed,
While irritations
Are too readily recorded."

*His* books are carefully catalogued,
His studs ready to hand,
And his banking-account comfortably balanced.
He wears a dark grey suit,
With a tie to match,
And speaks in a quiet monotone.
*She* can never find the latch-key,
And seldom keeps an appointment,
Her hair, like her room, is awry,
But her flowers are a joy to behold,
And her voice, as many-coloured as they,
Is infectious with enthusiasm.

*She* sees Napoleon—
Square of jaw and square of shoulder,
Firm in the saddle—
For ever mounted on his Charger—
The world before him,
Waiting to be conquered
But *He* sees him lonely on Elba,
Learning, too late,
That Christ's is the only Kingdom
Founded on Love,
And the only one
For which millions will always be willing to die. . .

And that thought leads to the one characteristic
Shared alike by this oddly-matched couple—

They are both lovable,
And they both unfeignedly Love each other. . .
And Love can make twin engines
Of the most unlikely metals.

And does not the graciousness of green grass
Blend all the discords in the flower-border?

ROBERTA SHUTTLEWORTH.

## TO MY DAUGHTER MARJORIE ON HER EIGHTEENTH BIRTHDAY

YOUTH is a conquest and a tide,
A flaunting of a banner wide;
Youth is a fever and a fret,
A blooming of a violet.
Youth is a flame, a shining hour;
A rose that doth enrich a bower:
Such blossoms fair alone compare
With thee, Dear Maid, so debonair.
Then ride thy chariot through the years,
And from the shoulder fling thy spears;
Thy mark, sweep pleasures' rich pursuits;
Thy quarry, youths' brave attributes.

HARRY SEFTON.

## LOVE'S SECURITY

SO now no hate can ever come between;
The beauty that is now has ever been,
And all the love that you and I have known
Has come to perfect flower, cannot be blown
About the world, about the brutal world;
It lives, expands and bursting into flower—
Not as the bombs that burst, nor as hate hurled
In blood and steel by nations drunk with power—
But as a simple thing: a happy word,
As golden sunlight falling on the lake,
As precious as the spring song of a bird
That worlds of violence cannot mar nor break.

DOUGLAS GIBSON.

## HIGH DIVE

POISE of photographic rhythm
latency of statued vigour
pliant flex of svelte limbs tensive
eager crouch of wild resilience.

Sudden lance in upper air,
high arched slenderness declining
in an outward dip slow turning
to the breathless swift descent.

Sped in parabolic curve
arrowing in bold desire
to the rapturous invitation
of the clear, cool dancing waters.

Shudder of limpidity : then
high the scud of spray exultant
from the frightened rush of foam
and the sigh of quick subsidence.

Downward gliding, gently sliding
to the depths of wavering motion
past dim shapes to shadows startled
from the luculence pale slanted.

Down, down deep into the
soundless way, into the still, chill
depths of gloom mysterious and quiet
hemispheres of wondering silence.

REGINALD AKHURST.
Corporal, R.A.F.

*" Death ? I don't mind either way . . .*
*the others are mostly there."*

A famous R.A.F., pilot, aged twenty.

NO marvel we who've passed the sixty mark
Care not how soon we join the gone before :
That twenty shrugs indifference to the dark—
" The rest are there—" this is your trophy, War.

REDCLIFFE MCKIE.

## LETHE

BEYOND our knowing there must be,
Encircled by a soundless sea,
A quiet infinity of peace
Where all the mad world's roar
Must cease,
And sink to nothingness—no more ;
And all this life an echo be
That troubles not that still grey sea.

And strange lost cries will linger there,
Unheeded on that dream-quiet air,
From friends who live and laugh and love
About the busy life we've left.
Above
Their tears and laughter we, bereft
Of both, shall sleep and drift past care
Of weeping, still and unaware.

SARAH HENTHORN.

## THE GARDEN

DO not be deceived my dear by equations
By old men stroking beardwise
Do not shudder at grimaces or wonder
Why God made you such a fool
These men with the expert faces
Clean shaven, slick-eyed, unpoetic,
Can schedule buses into garages
But keep no passports for heaven.
Raise your head over the rubble
Old cars on dumps street noises
Awkward voices and shilling in slot-machines.
Look up and in for the love they miss
Shrinking from passion with perfunctory kiss
There is honey-suckle in your garden
Sweet smelling herbs, fresh grasses
And apples
Go in, walk up and down
Like Naboth before he was bought out.

Trooper, R.A.C. D. HORNE.

## *THE QUESTIONERS*

### I. TO THE SLEEPING MEN

O MEN! that twenty years and more have slept
Far from your English homes, in foreign soil,
Placidly dreaming that your pain and toil
Had won a peace that ever would be kept;
That War's new horrors all were laid aside,
Unfit for decent men to plan or use;
That Science nevermore would dare abuse
Her powers by pandering to human pride—

Have you awaked to shock of coming strife,
To know your deaths a useless sacrifice,
To realize a higher, crueller price
Must yet be paid for each devoted life,
And feel sharp stabs of sick and angry pain
As low you question "*Did* we die in vain?"

### II. IN THE CEMETERIES

WHAT are the questions each one puts to each,
Poor tenuous shadows, grieving in the gloom,
Hovering disconsolate above each tomb,
Listening in vain for reassuring speech;
Turning dull eyes to scan the ghostly crowd,
In faint, shrill voices asking for the truth—
Had they given uselessly their joy and youth
And was it vain, the sacrifice they'd vowed?

And for their reassurance not a word!—
Only that premonition stronger grown
Of nameless ills impending horribly.
And from the distance, very faintly heard,
The cannon's thunder answering their moan,
The roar of bombers rushing up the sky.

### III. AT THE BAR OF HEAVEN

LO! where the Great White Throne in awful state
Guarded by Angels, Seraphim, and Powers,
Rises amidst the Golden City's towers,

A battered host comes marching to the Gate,
And gaining entrance 'midst that shining throng,
  Daring to brave the gloriousness of God,
  Bend low in awe, stretch hands to touch His Rod,
Cry with one voice " How long, O Lord, how long ? "

Showing their wounds they ask in hollow tones
  " Great Lord of Heaven, we deemed that as we died
    The world was loosed from brutal lust and greed,
    And so passed joyfully. Is this our meed
  That louder rise oppressèd nations' groans ?
O, why hast Thou the peace we willed denied ?

## IV. THE WATCHERS

THEY come and form in many an unseen rank
  Behind the lines where they had fought and bled,
  Austere, stern faces risen from the dead,
Their withered bodies stained with mildew dank.
They scan with anxious glance the new-come host
  Who joke and chatter where *they* dying fell ;
" Will these men come as we through a worse hell
To purchase victory, not count the cost ? "

And as they watch and listen, lo ! a light
  Of sober joy illumes each shadowy face,
    For they have found the old-time spirit there
Strong as their own—" The future dawneth bright
  For these are worthy to fulfil our place.
    All's well ! " they say. So to their tombs repair.

## V. TO INDIA

" MEN of the Mighty Hills, the wide-spread plains,
  Where Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra run,
  Men of Eternal Snows, of scorching sun,
Of hard-baked drought, of slashing Monsoon rains,
Come you again to make our quarrel yours,
  Gurkha and Sikh, Pathan, Mahratta, all
  Rallying instant to the far-off call
For quenchless valour, patience that endures ? "

Stern was the answer—" One has foully sinned !
And when mad lust of power cruelly slays,
And peace and justice flee his blood-soaked ways,
There is no shirking for the Men of Ind.
We've weighed the balance, found the quarrel just,
And stand with you because our Honour must ! "

G. E. MERRICK.

## TOUT PASSE

*It is necessary that things should pass away into that from which they are born.*

WEEP not for those who die ere yet
The splendid dawn of love has fled,
Or ere the morning star has set
The crimson rose of love is dead.

Nay, weep for those whose hopes must fade
As flowers 'neath the summer sun :
As faints the love of man and maid—
The splendour that was Babylon.

II SEMPER VIVENS.

The world is young and fresh and fair—
Instinct with life, and debonair !
They err who say the world grows old—
The song is sung, the story told ;
Nor can endeavour wax less bold
Till love grows cold,—till love grows cold.

M. D. CAMERON.

## THE RIVER

PETITE my breast,
cupped in sepal . . .
petal rippling
gold-green theme,
freshly lippling
sleepy stream . . .
slowly swings
my heart to rest.

Grenoside, Sheffield. GIVA DANE.

## TWIN ORACLES

'THE poet only lives when he is dead,'
So sang I half a century ago
When I was young and half in love with woe
As Shakespeare, or with death, as Keats had said.
Grown old, I bow my bald and careworn head
Bathed in life's reconciling afterglow
To that curled minstrel's oracle—I know
How closely truth and innocence are wed.

Not that I yield complaisance to the spite
Of knaves and fools who flout the dues of age:
Dateless the awe of wisdom's lotos-crown.
And robe of saffron hue—supernal might,
Glory, goodwill find utterance through the sage
And falsehood shrinks and shrivels in his frown.

Bath. CHARLES WHITBY.

## DUNKERQUE

"IN my mind's eye" I loaf upon a hill
That looks upon the land gaunt Caesar knew,
And Augustine, and that first zealous few
Who brought the blessed tidings of Goodwill.
And there within the haze the dear cliffs still
Call home to their white breast the weary crew,
Under the giddy height that Shakespeare drew:
I see Dan Chaucer chatting at the mill.

How soft the noon is soothing now the trees;
The very sky dips down as if in love
Of these long-reapen fields, the malt-rich loam;
Not even the heavy and salt-pungent breeze
Can quench the rose, as to a white-armed cove
I watch the unconquered conquered men come home.

Syracuse University. A. E. JOHNSON.

MRS. H. B. EMMET (Carlisle): I have pleasure in sending an increased subscription, with gratitude for the work you are doing, under present difficult circumstances.

# POETRY AND THE MIDDLE WAY

(Being a Précis of a lecture delivered to The Poetry Society on June 27th, 1941, by CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS.)

BEFORE discussing Poetry and the Middle Way it is necessary to define what is meant by "poetry" and by "the Middle Way." Now a poem is a thought-emotion plus a form of words. In order to live in the memory and on the lips of men it must fulfil a number of conditions, three of which may be considered paramount. It must be of universal appeal, that is, describe events or ideas or emotions of interest to all, for no one else is interested in a sonnet to your morning breakfast unless it is so written that it successfully conveys to others the satisfaction of breakfasting. Secondly, there must be a happy blending of life and form, of the idea and its setting, of the theme and the clothes in which it is presented to the world. Thirdly, there must be beautiful craftsmanship, whether this be an obviously deliberate pattern-making of vowels and consonants, wrought lovingly as the pattern and texture of a Persian rug, or a seemingly casual utterance of thoughts in words without reference to the pattern which the words may make. This form, the craft in which the art is fair enshrined, may take the form of prose or verse, the latter being prose which has risen to such intensity of emotion that the rhythm quickens into song. Thus a story which begins in prose may at times, from stress of emotion, break into verse, as in the *Arabian Nights Entertainment*, or into song as in certain forms of opera. But though poetry usually consists of verse, not all verse in my emphatic view is poetry, and only in a brief selection of the poems of an acknowledged poet is the proportion of poetry to verse, as I conceive the words, particularly high.

What then is poetry ? It is a light, a light which shines above the intellect and is visible to the mental eyes of men when one of them succeeds in providing the light with a beautiful and appropriate form. To use an analogy, there is electricity everywhere, but it cannot manifest until it is

given a delicate instrument such as a bulb through which its presence may be known. Poetry, like any other spiritual experience, can never be defined, but this factor of illumination is one of the signs of its presence, and another is its power to lift and excite the heart to a higher realm of experience. At these high levels it is only exceeded by the greatest art of all, music, of which poetry at its best is a lovely daughter, being one generation further removed from the Divine. Music, like its other daughter, dancing, lifts and excites, and so must verse if it is to rank as poetry. A set of verses may be cleverly conceived and competently written, in the sense that they obey the acknowledged rules of versification. But whether or not the result is a poem depends on the presence or absence of this inner light, this spiritual quickening, which, though it is "transmitting" every time the eye alights on the verses, will be "received" dimly or brilliantly according to the delicacy and refinement of the mind that reads. It follows that there is an art of appreciating poetry as well as of writing it, and the two capacities are both regrettably rare. A poem, then, to be a poem must sing, whether a dirge, a war song or an epithalamium. For myself,

> I sing of life—the world is filled with dying—
> Of life that treads the valley floors of death
> And laughing sings the while,
> And climbs through many a mile
> Joy-footed, from the deeps beneath,
> And draws upon the final heights new breath
> In splendour, as a flame in darkness crying. . .*

For the self of man may be viewed as a lighthouse which founded on the rock, yet rears its head into the sky, and there shines forth into the darkness with a flame that burns eternally. Within this tower, which stands unmoved, unyielding to the wind and waves, the lighthouse keeper, in this analogy the point of consciousness, moves up and down at will, now level with mother earth, now peering from a window half way to the top, now tending the bright reflectors of a light which is never *his*, though he is its guardian for his fellow men. ("The Light is within thee,"

said the Egyptian Hierophants ; " Let the Light shine ! ") But between a dim belief that the light in the heart is alight in every heart and the certain vision that the light is One there lies a journey from belief to knowledge, from divinity potential to divinity achieved, and vast, unnumbered millions in this world to-day are pilgrims on that journey which they call the Middle Way.

Five hundred years before another Teacher taught in Bethlehem an Indian princeling left his father's palace to find the cause of sorrow and the Way which led to sorrow's ceasing. He found it, after years' of bitter failure, and proclaimed it to mankind. Change and its companion, sorrow, are inherent in life the Buddha taught, but the cause of sorrow is desire, the craving which is born of the delusion that the self is separate, is different, is something which can profit from its brother's ill. The Self is One, proclaimed the Blessed One, and the end of sorrow is the death of the illusory self which strives against that utter Namelessness whose name to some is God and whose nature is Reality. " When self is all, the heart is blind," and yet :

> When self has died—O moment rare !
> The shutters of illusion thrust aside
> The gateways of the dark flung wide
> Of life and light made splendidly aware
> My lovelit heart sings in the morning air
> When self has died.

The Middle Way is found between all " pairs of opposites," even those of good and evil, heaven and hell, and life and death itself. Yet it knows no compromise. Beauty must be worshipped and won before a Way that is higher than beauty or ugliness can be discovered, for the Way, as the way of an eagle, is trackless and untraceable, yet marches through the market-place as through the monastery. Accepting all, denying nothing, it has one Goal, Reality, and none may know the Goal save he who reaches it. Along its weary length there is one law that operates, that there is neither rest nor pausing, only the inexorable command : " Walk On ! "

Along this Way there is the companionship of fellow

pilgrims, yet is it true to say that every pilgrim treads this road to self enlightenment unaided—and alone.

I am alone, yet seek not any friend.
I feel the heart of woe.
The face is veiled of my appointed end,
Yet this I know :
The future lies unmoulded in my hands.
A Path winds out before.
There is no backward way. Behind me stands
A closéd door.†

From the physical through the emotional to the mental, so runs the Way—and then ? The intellect is an instrument for learning *about* Reality ; it never knows it. The greatest expert on any subject is he who knows most *about* that subject ; only a higher faculty can learn the Truth first hand. This is the intuition, the faculty of direct cognition. He who sees with this inward eye has pierced the veils of illusion and escaped from the net of words and definitions in which, with the cumbersome hands of the intellect, men ever seek to snare the wings of Beauty-Truth-Reality. Some men seek the One through mysticism, passionate devotion to the God within ; some through occultism, the science of life and form whose lesser laws are known as " science " to-day ; others again, by a disciplined " mysticism of the will " reach out beyond the machinery of thought and feeling to the entrance to that " Sudden Path," which has been trodden by a thousand years of Masters of Zen Buddhism. Hence there are those who say :

There's pleasure in the body, strange delight
In all the functions of the day and night . . .
But lust of heart is better.
The feel of fear, resolved in swift relief ;
Blind anger, brutal past belief
To reason kneeling, and heart's kindliness . . .
Yet lust of thought is better.

Mind, the unswerving searchlight of the soul,
Womb and destroyer of each partial whole.
To build with cold conceptual glee
The shrine of an ideal, then set it free
And nobler build, moving on godlike feet
Toward the vision of the thing complete ;
But give me Zen.†

What, then, is the relation of poetry to the Middle Way? It has been said that the ways to the One are as many as the lives of men, and whether the devotee pursues the way of love for the Beloved, of higher mathematics to the realm where cosmic principles are captured in the symbols of arithmetic, of service to one's fellow men, or the way of beauty, manifold in form yet one essentially, always the law applies—"Drink from the fountain only." The spring as it leaves the rock is pure; soon, as the stream develops, the waters are tarnished, stained with the limitations of the banks whose fetters make the stream and give it firm direction. Drink from the fountain only, and the water will be pure.

Whether the Goal be the true or the good or the beautiful, the way thereto is still the Middle Way between extremes, and any expert in any art will agree that harmony or balance is the first law of design, whether the pattern be of words or colours or sounds. If the consciousness be still low in the lighthouse, the point of view will be still material; if the consciousness be raised just so much nearer to the light there will awaken in the heart that tiny flame of compassion whose rays, in full development, will warm the world. For perfect love is one with beauty, and perfect love casteth out fear.

> I banish fear. With heart and mind elate
> Wide visioned as the darkness ebbs away
> I move on gentle feet, compassionate,
> With eyes that knowing fear and sorrow, wait
> Watching the dawnlight of an ampler day.
> The winds of war may fell the noblest tower;
> The heart resplendent dominates the hour,
> No more afraid.*

We poets are led by a light within, content with nothing less than the unattainable, ever humble at the endless range of life's potentialities, filled at all times with a holy wondering. We live in days of war, when the face of beauty is veiled with the dust of our own destructiveness. But the sun remains though clouds have covered it, and peace and war are relative terms. From the first step on the Middle Way to the Goal which lies beyond imagining there is alternate peace and war in the world about us, and alternate

war and peace in the heart within. Life is immortal; only the body dies. We live in days when the lesson of *anicca*, endless change, is easy to perceive. But he who treads the Middle Way from life to life, searching for beauty in her myriad forms, will rise above the fear of change, of the loss of "dear familiar things," even of the body in which our fragment of the one unending Life now manifests.

Let there be neither doubting now, nor tears;
He nothing fears
Who life itself wears lightly, as a flower.*

The forms of beauty will perish, and the bodies of men and cities go down into the dust, but all experience is learning, is a brightening of the light within, and in the end even the warring nations will seek and find enlightenment.

I saw the nations as a single man
Who tore his striving limbs . . .
I saw him grope and sway with blinded eyes
In agony of soul's unease;
Then slow but still resistant fall
Down to unwilling knees.
And there, in sudden wild amaze
As though a splendour seen afar,
I saw his heart with yearning fill
And, in his opened eyes, a star.*

Quotations from poems marked * are from the Author's *Poems of Peace and War* (Favil Press). Those marked † are from the Author's *Studies in the Middle Way* (C. W. Daniel).

## NOCTURNE

HER little chamber is hard by the roof,
Under the stars.
When she has climbed the winding stairs
She runs to the slanted window
And peers down, down, to the dusky street below.

Who is that, passing swiftly out of the house-door?
Now he is crossing the road by the lamplight yonder.
His face leaps white—and is lost in the swallowing darkness.

Out of her skyward window leaning,
She beckons and throws, what he does not see,
Her heart like a falling star.
It whirls and whirls in the air, seeking a home,
Then, finding none, sinks cold and shrivelled to ashes,
A handful of dust in the night.

W. SKENE LAURENCE.

# ENGLAND

SHOULD any ask you, What is England ?
Say : It is not just a fair, beloved land ;
It is sane tempers schooled by nasty weather,
Green school fields, class worship, smell of saddle-leather,
The joy of Saturdays, fried fish and beer, the rain
Across the downs that smacks the face and sweeps the brain,
Long, sun-burned river hours, crisp eccles cakes,
First snowdrops, habit's joyous tyranny that makes
The Christmas mincemeat, Monday washing-day,
The blackbird's song that shakes a dew-filled hawthorn spray,
Pink coats that cut the mist at covertside,
The pride of home-grown fruit, great crowds at Whitsuntide,
The thrill of running barefoot on the sand,
Lost, golden lanes where sweethearts giggle hand in hand,
The thud of heart and hoof, white paddock rails,
Morning trains and bowler hats and Daily Mails,
The corny hands of farmers, scones and cream,
Sublime assurance we the English are supreme,
Old ladies snipping roses, sipping tea,
Morning coats, red tape and certain victory,
Fair children, cherry-nosed, a-carolling,
The sound of bells, the smell of beef on Sunday mingling,
Romance of harbours, thrill of royalty,
The football watchers' cheer, unshouted loyalty,
Conservative, pig-headed, bridge-mad folk,
The ease of whisky, slippers, fire, tobacco smoke,
The sawdust smell of fairs, bullseyes, cheap toys,
The London diapason, lights and paper boys,
The dark-plumed pines against a burning sky,
The taste of apple charlotte ; it is you and I,
The spaniels at our heels, the gorse-flanked ride ;
All this is England ; aye, and more than this beside :
It is the bourn of Heaven, passing praise,
Where gentle, godly people live by godly ways,
A chain of heroes buttressing her name,
And wise men working miracles to swell her fame,
And poets who laud tradition with sweet rhyme ;
It is a bondless spirit rooted deep in time,
Whose rise to fairer strength shall never cease,
Ever spiralling to God through phoenix-peace.

CHLORIS HEATON ROSS.

Chesham.

## TO THE UNREWARDED GREAT OF ALL NATIONS

ENDURANCE is a monument, the splendour of whose head
A crown of chiselled thorns
Adorns—
A man of stone, whose heart has bled.
His eyes look still
Upon that hill,
Where freedom, love and purpose are
Fixed, yet flashing like a star.

A cloud of wings, a storm of guns, a thundering of feet,
A gloom of city walls
Down falls,
And floods across the silence of the street.
Swift and strong
That street along,
Men run. Men fall. Walls, towns again
We can rebuild, but not those men,

Whose courage was an arch of flame, a singleness of fire,
Who formed each tear
Into a spear,
Whose blows were strong with purpose, swift with ire.
To strike and stand
They pledged their land.
Above the street where death and courage march,
More lovely than the rainbow spring their arch.

MARGERY SMITH.

## FRAGRANCE OF LAVENDER

A HONEYED breeze
Came swiftly from the south, light as a sigh,
A faint elusive whisper passing by,
Yet stirred a fragrant haunting memory
To instant life, and painted brilliantly
A vivid pageant of the past for me.

Calm days, when life
Flowed on unruffled as a placid stream:
Soft laughter, merry talk, the molten gleam
Of silver on white damask, candle light
On sparkling glass, the fire glowing bright

Touching with rosy fingers shadowy nooks
And shining on familiar treasured books,
Rustle of silk and slow unhurried tread,
Pot-pourri jars that wistful perfume shed—
Held essence of the summer's vanished flowers—
And peaceful hands folded in evening hours.

Of happy dawns
With golden sunlight flooding quiet rooms
And dancing in a garden gay with blooms.
Dear, well remembered flowers! proud hollyhocks,
Fair, cherished roses and night-scented stocks;
Sweet-William, mignonette, and rosemary,
And rainbow-hued, ethereal sweet pea;
The tawny, velvet wall-flowers drenched with rain,
Diffusing sweetness that was almost pain:
But breathing sweeter incense on the air
A rippling sea of fragrant lavender.

A honeyed breeze
Heady with borrowed perfume, poignantly
Turned back the pages of life's book for me.

Belfast. OLIVE GORDON HASLUCK.

## WAVES

TIPPED with their bubbled foam,
the long sea-waves roll in and break,
roll in and break,
roll in and always break,
as waves of life from the deep centre
of the imponderable *All*;
and always the bubbles break,
reform
and break again,
always different, always the same.
The interminable effort must have objective,
but is it never attained?—
waves of life, of mind, of soul,
forever rolling, breaking, reforming
to roll and break, and again reform!

Vancouver, B.C. IRENE H. MOODY.

# THE SEA

I SAW the blue-veiled arable land where Hereford barley springs
When all about the devious fields the summer vapour clings
In palpitant uncertainty's immeasurable degree :
" If only," I said, " that brooding vapour had overhung the sea ! "

I saw the yellowing wheatfield mantle Canada's hedgeless plains,
When the pale sun had superseded the gleaming of the rains,
And heard the wind hum through the wheat ears as boys hum through a comb,
And wished the wheat fields were sea waters and the swayed wheat ears, foam.

I saw the troops of a tempest charging a forest of young pines,
Standing straight in the massed formation of their unyielding lines,
And as some fell in the long engagement to honourable graves .
I longed for the storm's imperious onslaught upon sea water waves.

In Georgia, clear in noonday sunlight I saw Atlanta lie,
Lifting her feathery white skyscrapers into a settled sky,
Unsatisfied, I thought of the rising of less abiding towers
Balancing over their sea green bastions white minarets of showers.

Never the green and solid waters gather themselves in bands
And surge along a narrow harbour or rush along the sands
Or pillage half a wall of concrete to play at battledore
But wild hearts leap to behold their licence and wish that it were more.

On the safe ships in Bombay waters, on cliffs where two seas meet,
Men of the firm earth feel a rapture nothing can counterfeit,
They share the glory past and ended, the glory yet to be,
The glory immanent in all time, when they behold the sea.

Men of the land-imprisoned counties are hungry for the rocks
In generosity of waters, and countless seagull flocks,
The doggedness of the dauntless breaker, the long smoke trailing past,
The terrible line of the horizon, the disappearing mast.

And when they see the unstable waters their thoughts are very deep,
With passionate seas they throb in passion, with slumbering seas they sleep,

So it was with the Trojan Seamen, and so will ever be
When men behold the runagate waves, when men behold the sea!

I. Sutherland Groom.

## PORTRAIT OF A LADY KNITTING

SHE sits
And knits,
Nothing happens at all.
If at least one of her stitches would fall,
A shudder perhaps would pass through her lightly,
Or she might lift her head in surprise, if but slightly
Yet nothing happens at all.

She sits
And knits,
A priestess of obscure intention,
Put to her task, not permitting the mention
Of occurrence but loosely connected with that
Which has tightly involved her in the net
Of obscure and unwholesome intention.

She sits
And knits,
Her head quite empty of matter,
Except for such tit-bits of chitter-chatter
As—" to-morrow is Sunday, and Whitsun is near,"
and, " I'll wear the blue hat if the weather keeps clear "
And similar frivolous matter.

She sits and knits,
And knits and sits,
And tension strains her mind,
As if she had started off on a race
And forgotten while running, both time and place
And was destined to be left behind,
While sitting and knitting,
And knitting and sitting—
Just knitting.

Livia Laurent.

G. D. Reeves, Highgate, N.6; I enclose a slightly larger subscription for this year. I look forward to The Poetry Review more than ever nowadays, and I am very glad you are continuing to publish it.

# DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: XCI

Henry Gershwin, the author of *Face to the Wind*, is recorded as composer, author of the International Prize Winning " Ecstasy," featuring Hollywood's latest star Hedy Lamarr. Mr. Gershwin writes me that this collection has merited acknowledgement on behalf of Prime Minister Churchill, Lord Halifax, President Roosevelt, Cecil B. De Mille and many others of note. This is Gershwin's first volume of poems and lyrics. The title poem follows :

Into the chaos and tumult we were hurled
To take each stroke of fortune as it comes,
Never to know wherefore the current swirled
That put the Spark into our craniums,
Till naught is left in this mortal world
But throbbing memories ; deep, muffled drums.

Little by little the Sea of Life is spanned.
Each bridge once crossed we never more rescind.
Fear and temptation intrude on every hand.
The pits of Hell are filled with those who've sinned.
Yet, God grant that we may always stand
Undaunted, strong in heart, Face to the wind !

When the raising of a country's flag over conquered nations is a daily occurrence in Europe, perhaps interesting is "Flags in the Dust "—

Flags in the dust !
Victims of rapacious lust !
Your colours will be flown again !
Your nations will be known again !
Eager hands will reach for you.
Eager tongues will preach for you.
Eager hearts will fight for you.
Liberty's torch burns bright for you.
God has your trust ! Your cause is just !
Flags in the dust !

It would seem that the mecca of all writers is now the vehicle afforded by the screen. If the readers attend as often as I do, they will know the enormous value of this amazing product. On August 13th we celebrated here in America the fact that it was the month and date when Mr. Edison said : " Write this down." It is a far cry from this comment and where we have been carried by the genius of such miracle makers. Who has not seen Charle Chaplin in *The Great Dictator*? Twelve visits to that screen play proved all too few for this reviewer. Not only conceiving this story, paying for its production and playing in it, Charlie Chaplin emerges as one of the great showmen of the hour, perhaps next we will place Noel Coward.

" Ego " is graphic :

If a jackass could speak,
Perhaps he'd tell us why he brays,

But when a man brays, the reason
Is beyond comprehension !

Loker Raley hails from Maryland, poet and publisher, young and enthusiastic and going on very well. In this rather slim volume, *Salute to the New-Born*, he addresses the child in infancy, childhood adolescence, manhood. From " Infancy " we quote :

Your infant life is sometime like a flower
Dreamless and silent, feeding on the sun,
And sometime like a drowsy cat that stirs
Blinking among mirages, which it paws
But touches only air : your fingers grasp
The figments of your dreams and close on air.

From " Childhood "—

Next the surprise of reason after the surprise of life,
A world falling into order like a kaleidoscope scene—

" Adolescence " shows the storm of life gathering :

But now
The convolutions of the restless mind,
The lovely torture of the heart, commence :
More worlds unearthed beneath your world, more stars
Behind your stars, more gods above your god.

It is some order to order yourself to write such an address. Try it, if you don't believe it.

We pause before closing this book to read " Initial Snow "—

The last bonfire of Autumn flames and fails,
A lonely leaf forsakes a lonely bough,
The tardiest birds bring down the sky their prow
And leave the Northland songless. The day pales,
Goes gray, goes wan, and panics into snow,
Coming like candle-flames that light the night
Or soundered blossoms whirled to sudden flight
That fall and burn the grass whereon they blow.

The dawn creeps like a panther up the sky
Then springs across the earth with padded feet ;
The drifted town of ivory stands complete
Where silvered towers hold their turrets high ;
I stand within this crystalline surprise
And look for Autumn stiffened in the ice.

If all of us poets were publishers as well the river of poetry would be a vaster flow than it is but very few would be as capable as Loker Raley. He is doing something quite new in poetry : he is to publish a poetry newspaper, appearing every fortnight. This " Poetry News " will carry any items of news and will have, I believe, a cordial reception and many subscribers. Raley is also contemplating bringing out my collection written on the tour round the world. I planned to have it

brought out in London but at the present that is out of the question and many of the places celebrated have become very familiar through the newspapers like Saigon, Singapore, Hongkong, etc. Wars do extend our geographical knowledge here in the U.S.A.

Annie Laurie Trousdale, author of *Beating Wings* (G. P. Putnam Sons, New York) is a college graduate, a song composer, a world traveller, is the founder of the Rittanhouse Poetry Society; founder and president of the Houston Conservatory of Music, Alumni Association and the Hammond Foundation. As a lecturer she has appeared throughout the South and West and from Vermont to Florida.

In three short stanzas Miss Trousdale gives the picture "Home Town":

I love the beaming faces
Of the old home town
I love the little stores
That march up and down.

I love the modest homes—
Their complacent air—
The serene wholesomeness
That prevails everywhere.

The quiet little streets
With their friendly ways;
Tucked so close to life
All their sunny days.

Someone has said, in describing the enchantment of poetry: "the few right words may give one the universe." The poems here abound with sincerity, warmth, colour and feeling, as evidenced in the following: "Renunciation"—

I will go
To the world's end
Should love beckon me;
Barefoot and ragged—
Briar bruised and torn—
Hair unbound;
To the tent of love.

Grace Noll Crowell, author of *Splendor Ahead*, (Harper Bros., New York) writes:

"In these darkly troubled days it seems to me that the poets should feel keenly their responsibility. It should be a sacred trust to be able to set down in beautiful language, the hope that still lifts, the faith that still shines, the courage that remains undaunted despite the awful tragedy of war and persecution and disaster that is running like a

destructive fire over the world."

As recently as June, 1940, THE POETRY REVIEW carried word about Mrs. Crowell's previous collection of poems. Deeply religious fervour is to be found in all these new ones. The thought embodied in the following must be in the hearts of all of us : " O Beautiful Boy "—

You have run with the sun, you have raced with the wind,
You have kept as clean as the wind is clean,
You stand with a dazzle of light in your eyes
With seemingly nothing at all between
You and the goal that your heart was set,
And yet—and yet. . . .

Over the world a tiger stalks,
His eyes spurt fire, his mouth drips wet,
And there in a castle a mad man talks
In his mad wild dreams, and men forget
That mother have reared their clean sons for
Something better than war !

Who, privileged to know Louisiana, does not turn with interest to a celebration of that beautiful State. *Deep Bayou*, by Ethel Green Russell, is coloured by the Catholic spirit prevalent in this State. " Twilight in Louisiana " follows :

The herons cruise above the pines
And wings are spread aware
The hour has come when day resigns
To twilight's holy prayer.

Each soft-winged creature pivots high
At tip of chosen tree.
The arms of crosses on the sky,
Are white and silvery.

In some cathedral, distant, old
The angelus now swings. . .
From golden tones, high-souled,
I hear the echoings.

One moment only I, too, pray
Then watch the spread wings fold
Against the waning rim of day,
Against the sky's thin gold. .

Each feathered speck, a soft white flare
Untouched by acolyte. . . .
Each slender tree a taper there
Upon the altered night.

The picture is well-drawn: as an artist and poet Mrs. Russell writes. She sends a special note to us: Especially at this time of unrest when vacations are cancelled because of manoeuvres or the patriotic economy of automotive-fuel, the hobby of writing and the study of poetry become even more interesting and I find myself delving deeper and deeper into its intricacies. After a morning at the Red Cross, cutting garments or rolling bandages, an hour or more with one's own poem or the reading of the " little journals " is refreshing and although " that something " from which poetry in built is not materialistic, I believe the spirit behind a freshly written poem to be as vital to defence as the much prized materials of war! And whether one writes or not, may each of us interested in the finer things of life help to keep the " little magazines " of to-day alive for our Nation's To-morrow, remembering the most beautiful and lasting verse has always been written during " wars and rumours of wars."

*An Anthology of Pulitzer Prize Poems*, 1922-1941 compiled by Marjorie Barrows (Random House, New York), is a valuable addition to one's poetry library, carrying as it does selections from every book of poetry that has won the Pulitzer Prize from 1922 to 1941. A humorous reviewer said the other day, that " the Pulitzer Prize was the kiss of death "—amusing but not strictly true. We find here Miss Millay, Miss Lowell, Mrs. Speyer, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Stephen Benet, Conrad Aiken, George Dillon, Archibald MacLeish, Robert Hillyer, Audrey Wurdemann, Robert P. Tristram Coffin, Robert Frost, Maya Zaturenska, John Gould Fletcher, Mark Van Doren and Leonard Bacon. A formidable array!

How may we select to quote without showing partiality? Let us enjoy Miss Lowell's " Summer Night Piece ":

The garden is steeped in moonlight,
Full to its high edges with brimming silver,
And the fish-ponds brim and darken
And run in little serpent lights soon extinguished.
Lily-pads lie upon the surface, beautiful as the tarnishings on frail
old silver,
And the harvest moon droops heavily out of the sky,
A ripe, white melon, intensely, magnificently, shining.
Your window is orange in the moonlight,
It glows like a lamp behind the branches of the old wistaria,
It burns like a lamp before a shrine,
The small, intimate, familiar shrine
Placed reverently among the bricks
Of a much-loved garden wall.

Those who have not read Joseph Auslander's " Letter to Amy Lowell," I suggest they beg, borrow or steal this book. It is one of the best things that has been entrusted to the printed page.

At the other end of the rainbow arch of poetry we give Audrey

Wurdemann's " Only The Blackbird " :

Only the blackbird will insist
On his one note ; the thrush
Rummages like a botanist
And the bee burrs in plush
While that sweet ventriloquist
The cuckoo, cannot hush.

And this is well, and that is well,
And summer has no use for death.
The snail coiled in his thrice-coiled shell
Partakes one little smoky breath
Before the frost invokes that spell
That ends in winter's shibboleth.

Only the blackbird : all the rest
Are singing a hundred songs of fire
To ward away the winter lest
It feed on them and their desire ;
Only the blackbird whistles well
His one clear note : only the snail
Leaves one unsteady silver trail ;
Only are left, when the frost is over,
Lost in the roots of the dying clover,
A red-tipped feather, a red-lipped shell.

It is good to have another volume (*Three Moods*, E. P. Dutton, New York), from Arthur Inman, author of *Red Autumn*, *Bubbles of Gold*, *American Silhouettes*, *Silhouettes Against the Sun*, *The Night Express*, *None Now Are Quietly Wise*.

New England has blessed all her poets with love of the phenomena of nature as found in beautiful New England. In the Foreword we find Mr. Inman says among other things :

> " We of now are eye to eye with revolution. If we are not personally great enough, or wily enough, or of enough moment to halt revolution, then it follows that we must accommodate ourselves to revolution."

We who have loved Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach* are eager to read what Arthur Inman says :

The sea ? The sea is calm to-night, to-night,
On Dover beach. The moon is high. The waves
Make solemn cadence as they fall. The white
Wide distance spreads to the far sidereal caves
Of the stars.

He who felt all on logic wrought,
Even beauty, had known bewilderment,

Eyes in his wise calm head to have been caught
By else in this sweet night.

A personal confession interests the reader in "Always With Me Walks"—from it we take the first lines :—

Always with me walks the shadow of my discontent,
A restless something that is neither saved nor spent,
A dwarf inseparable that will not let me be
Though I should seek escape across the farthest sea,
Or in your arms, or with my eyes closed fast in sleep.
There is, alas, no haven from the intimate deep
Unrest that has my heart undone from any peace,
Bent helplessly, as the long harsh wind with no release
Bends the lone reed in a grip that wears not sound nor shape.

This poem continues to express the nostalgic recognition of some unearthly presence.

This collection is divided as follows : "This I Know," "Hokusai Saw," and "The Maples Are Red." Mr. Inman tells us of Hokusai, "of his intense and consuming devotion to his art beyond contradiction, careless of money, indifferent where or how he lived, vital, forceful, untiring, turning out work at an astounding rate, he lived only to draw and paint." Mr. Inman tells us : "it has been the consistent effort and pleasure of the author of the following poems to endeavour to transmute from medium of art to another, from one culture to another, from one age to another, somewhat of the body and the spirit of the great master, Hokusai." Let us read :

Here bends the quiet blue sky ;
Here lies the low green shore :
And the clouds between are yellow
As are the pale roofs, the pale
Straw-stacks, among the still trees.
Beneath beamed torii,
Fuji, distant, is dream peak
Within calm picture arranged.
Rippleless waters spread
In mirrorlike shallows.
Fisherfolk, wading, gather
Wet calms in round deep baskets.
And so the morning passes.
No wind will come to-day
Out of high and tranquil sky.

Mr. Inman expresses his views of Eliot and Cummings :

"I feel that Eliot and Cummings and the other obscurantists have done the cause of poetry immeasurable harm, both in making it fail of its larger purpose of stimulating and leading mankind, and in reducing the audience for poetry to a minimum. I have, therefore, endeavoured to be clear in *Three Moods*, if nothing else. I hope not at the expense of other qualities."

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

# A DIVERSITY OF GIFTS

*Verses of a Fighter Pilot*, by Flying Officer A. N. C. Weir, D.F.C. (Faber, 5s. net).

Mr. Weir, born in 1919, lived as a boy in Egypt, spent holidays on the Continent that gave him command of French and German, went to Winchester, and thence to Christ Church, Oxford, had thoughts of the Civil Service, abandoned them for medicine, and ended by getting into the R.A.F. He fought in the Battle of Britain and destroyed three German planes on the first day of the " blitz," August 8th. He was killed in the following November.

It is difficult here to separate the poet and the man. The man was of a type—manly, talented, speculative, ambitious and poetical. Character and versatility would have made him a somebody had he lived : and if he had had the time, amidst his living, he might have made himself a poet of note. These poems show felicity, variety and sincerity, and therewith a considerable promise of expressive power that might have made him, quite apart from his poetry, an effective advocate by voice or pen and a vigorous man of affairs.

Of the nature poetry " Summer Night " may be quoted :

> " The moon kept watch while the clouds slept in heaven
> as though they slept ever
> and the night sky were always serene. Yet even
> the moon must deceive me.
> As I watched, the sleepers awakened, and soon
> and wind drove them headlong,
> and storm clouds slid wildly over the moon
> like a lost herd of elephants."

And " War " :

> " When the bloom is off the garden,
> and I'm fighting in the sky,
> when the lawns and flower beds harden,
> and when weak birds starve and die,
> the death-roll will grow longer,
> eyes will be moist and red ;
> and the more I kill, the longer
> shall I miss friends who are dead."

The epigrammatic finish is also used effectively in " Soot."

The man and the poet both speak in

> " There is a life in peace and strife
> which everyone must live ;
> we give our best and go to rest
> when we've no more to give.
>
> For when the heart has done its part
> and can no longer beat,
> with love and hope beyond our scope
> we may admit defeat."

" Sick City," the most challenging of the poems, harks back to

American models in its manner and its reformism. For a boy's work at 18 it is remarkable.

*To-Morrow is a Revealing*, by Lilian Bowes-Lyon (Cape, 3s. 6d.).

This is reader-proof and reviewer-proof work, if any poetry ever was. There is so much strength of thought, such a music, such precision of feeling, such instant adjustiveness, such variety of focussing the near, the far, and the midview, such finality in the style, such boldness with delicacy,—and all the raw force and material of it made to shine and glow with beauty. The sheer craftsmanship might be from old Egypt ; and some of the rhythms from the finest of Horace's.

These poems, clearly, were not written with an eye to praise or a wide public. To lament their difficulty and their scrupulous aloofness would be beside the mark. The cue in reading them, by the way, seems to be no poring but a swift sweeping pace. Several are easily got thus, " The Dog-Tooth Violets," " The Grave," " Blue Chasm," " A Refugee," " Thin Air," " Two Grey Horses," " Lodestar," " A Son," and " Daybreak "—almost ! And these, I reflect, make a high proportion of the whole. Perhaps Miss Bowes-Lyon is not after all so very difficult.

There are felicitous and magical touches. Take the curiously intimate and effective line :

" Or tenderly knows the hovering upland holy "

or, without too much troubling to understand it,

. . ." Ash-tree
Cutter of keys that fit the lock of the wind,"

or some of the lines in " The Blind Tramp "

" Her darkness fell before her day was done ; "

" She loves no landmark now, no singular tree,
And keeps no tryst with memory, none with hope.
Some covet life to lose it ; some agree
With Christ at last, like dew the sun draws up."

" The Passive Hands," in its eight brief lines is beautifully worked. So is " The Keen Wind "—a daring fancy, a " conceit " that succeeds, though the last line of it,

" To bleed is the heart listening, our deed is the heart heard," is puzzling enough by itself.

There are delectable lines in " Till Streams are Banners " and " A Refugee." But there are such lines in most of the poems, and the lines are worked into the ensemble with so much art that to quote less than whole poems would be disruption.

In a sense the poems are all too good. As the high lights of a long work they would have carried easily a great deal of in-between writing. If not a long poem, a loose thread of unity might serve as well to link up expressions of this writer's power into some whole, imposing and

searching and convincing. There is enough striking home to the quick in the world at this moment to afford perhaps a theme or a choice of themes. With the right thread, and a sufficiency of the " in-between " Miss Bowes-Lyon would probably,—but poets are better enjoyed than advised.

*Patria*, poems by L. H. Allen, *Cut from Mulga*, poems by E. G. Moll, Melbourne University Press, and Oxford University Press, 4s. 6d. each.

These two refreshing and reassuring and diverse books from Australia will please many lovers of poetry. Mr. Moll owes something to America, Mr. Allen almost all to England. Mr. Moll, the easier to read, portrays Australia in a straightforward happy response to the land, the types, the trees, the animals, to all of it. He writes vividly, humorously, tenderly, with instinctive point and brevity, and he makes his readers see and enjoy Australia. There is not a bad or empty poem in his book, and there are many that charm by their vision and sentiment and music. There is natural history in them that will surprise some readers, as the swallows that wall in sparrows and the foxes that bite out lambs' tongues. Early in the book comes " The Bush Speaks " which is short enough to quote :

" I will be your lover
If you keep my ways.
All delights I'll give you :
Gum-tree scented days,
Skies where kestrels hover,
Nights with stars ablaze.

But if you diminish
Care and think me won,
Other gifts I'll give you
Edged with thorn and sun,
And the crows will finish
What I have begun."

The picture of bush life would give children, not to mention grown ups, a better intuition of Australia than the present race of school books. But there is a great deal more than pictures of bush life in *Cut from Mulga*. It is to be hoped that Mr. Moll will go on writing and publishing.

Mr. Allen derives from the English poets of last century, though not from the easier models among them. The name-poem " Patria " introduces Australia surprisingly in nine sonnets. " The West Wind " owes something to Shelley and Keats, but it is an achievement : not many poets now writing would have attempted it. " Flos Purpureus," about a dead child, is ambitious, and also an achievement, and though Mr. Allen is not in general quotable, I quote from it :

" Thou art no loser, for thine innocence
So primal was, a dawn so undefiled,
'Twere not thy profit had thy days grown dense
With what hath autumned me."

Mr. Allen is a thinker and philosophises in his verse. His technique is remarkable : he has a great gift with diction and cadence and phrasing, with finish to the last detail. His thought is urgent and searching : the very intensity of it, uniform and gripping, sometimes supersedes the flexibility and variety of feeling that are the due of poetry. The harder Mr. Allen is thinking, the less pleasing on those occasions is his poetry. Thought in a poet requires, of course, close control. Reading Mr. Allen I have wondered whether he may not have reserves of rhetoric and argument in him, and whether he has found adequate vents for these powers. Perhaps on the whole, or at least in this book, he thinks too much and grudges himself feeling. " Winter Willow," with more vision and feeling than thought, is a pleasing glimpse : the old tree bends over the stream :

. . . " An old stripped Willow o'er its image grieves,
In the deep desolation of its wreck
Drooped over memory, disillusioned, wan."

" Sargon," and the " Queen of Punt " succeed in a different vein, a vein worth Mr. Allen's working at.

Mr. Allen is a poet of calibre. He is fastidious and scrupulous both for substance and for form. Wherever his book reaches, his right to a hearing will be recognised. Strict thought and an intensity largely dependent on thought will probably always mark his work. But he is entitled to follow the roving moods and the listings of the spirit—to take his art easy according to Yeats' line " as the grass grows on the weirs," and to experiment in more keys than he uses at present.

*A Dream Observed*, by Anne Ridler (No. 2 P.L. Pamphlets, Poetry (London).)

These twelve short or shortish poems are of an unusual quality. Their substance is wholesomely earthy in its closeness to life, and sincere. There are rememberable flavours in them and apt lines that cling in the memory, as for instance :

" As in a cove
That makes in monstrous cliffs a salient,
Each sound echoes, and makes more silent
The cove by contrast and men speak soft,
Silence hangs in the trees."

or " And we talk tipsy with too much light."

or " Snails with their safety on their backs "

or " So let our times by the living streams
In the secret cottage, or in the curled combes
Be taken up into Godhead, and be for ever."

Language and cadence are sometimes prosy, and matter too, but

forgivably. The writer refuses to be rushed, whether by forcefulness of thought or strong rhythm or emphasis of poetic diction, preferring in her search for a delicate dainty music that truly renders her mood to risk, here and there, touches of unevenness and obscurity in the metre, and some near-eclipses of it.

Readers will remark a feminine obstinacy about facts that smacks a little of America. No strong-winged imagination sweeps here through the empyrean : facts are theme. But the restrained procedure makes poetry of the material, and often poetry of great charm. " Zennor " has this charm, with its . . . " pendent ships " . . . and

. . ." We could not understand
Finding the sea so high above the land
What held its waters from flooding the world entire.
To-day it lies in place, and the dun houses,
The apple-green cloudy oats, the cows that seem
Compact of the yellow crust of their cream,
Shrink on Amalveor's grey and tawny sides " . . . .

" Before Sleep," more intimate and more finished, is perhaps the best of all. And it is pleasant to have the complete version of the poem printed in the July Poetry Review.

John Murray.

## JUST PUBLISHED.

By far the most interesting collection of poems that I have read for some time are those of Terence Tiller, just published at 2s. 6d. in The New Hogarth Library series. They are strange and arresting, in that they read as though they were the thoughts and voice of a poet caught between two worlds. Held to life by the frail silk of nature which war tears apart and threatened by death, which shadows every life to-day :

" Still the cold bed of being two, the sharp
and screaming rack of Europe, must for all
our metaphysics, all
our loving, be ; and last.
Strength fails us and widens withers
and earth forsakes us
And night finds us."

This was written in Egypt 1940 and is definite war poetry. Verlaine and Rimbaud have so exhausted the heart as a poetic medium that one is inclined to shy at love poetry. But Tiller's poems are not the surface expatiations of an electric love-malady, but elementals, inseparable from the unity of mind and flesh. The strength of his poetry lies in his ability to reach fundamental things and though in some poems he is obscure, he will become less exacting to his readers as time develops his great gifts of imagery. His style is after Augustus Lukeman's massive sculpture, a whole conception from an outpost of life, rather than a detailed idea ; and in this respect the dedication is a valuable key as to how to translate the meanings—

" Time is the medium, not the kind
of dreaming in the actual tense."

There is another book, not poetry, but a condensed collection from all Mr. Eliot's prose work, selected and edited by John Hayward, under the title " Points of View " (Faber, 3s. 6d.). Naturally much valuable material has been discarded, since books of one-hundred and fifty-six and ninety-nine pages have allotted, in some cases as little as two or three pages space-value. But the kernel has been skilfully extracted and is in the original text as written by T. S. Eliot.

Following the abridged addition of Mr. Eliot's prose works comes his latest poem in the shilling edition (Faber), " The Dry Salvages," from which I have already quoted in the article on his work in relation to the lay-reader. The sea and its rhythm seems one of Eliot's happiest mediums and it will be interesting to watch what standard he will take this technique to, the technique of the Tide's music.

" At nightfall in the rigging and the Ariel,
Is the voice descanting (though not to the ear,
The murmuring shell of time, and not in any language
'Fare forward, you who think that you are voyaging ;
You are not those who saw the harbour
Receding, or those who will disembark,' " etc.

A book of verse particularly interesting at this time is a first collection of poems by W. R. Rodgers (Secker and Warburg) titled " Awake." In some respects it is ironic, in the manner of Sassoon, though not so scalding ; and directed against the achievement of the individual in relation to civilization. It contains many original images, but not so remote in their juxtaposition that they cannot be read with comparative ease, thus providing a much desired link between poetry we know and poetry that is in the melting pot of development and which as a medium is, strictly speaking, not entirely under complete control.

" The spin of flesh on the spindle of bone," is a phrase I have met before and which I particularly remarked. With some excitement I chased through Edith Sitwell's last book, but found only

" The terrible Gehenna of the bone
Deserted by the flesh," etc.

Somewhere Mr. Rodgers' " Summer Holidays " and I have made contact before, though not so far as I searched vainly amongst his published work, in *Horizon*. His " Far-off Hills " is the gist of a subject I have frequently discussed with my son and which Rodgers has so adequately interpreted in this poem. It is perhaps his every day factors which attract one to his work and call out the relieved sigh " Ah, here is someone to whom we can talk ! "

" O when shall we, all spent,
Row in to some far strand,
And find, to our content ;
The original land

From which our boat once went,
Though not the one we planned."

E. M. STEPHENSON.

## A GROUP OF POETRY REVIEWERS

THE Rev. T. Pittaway has chosen *The Call and Early Messages of Jeremiah* as the subject for his new book of verse, and he writes with his usual felicity of phrase and apt application of lesson. The Prophet is set against a background of erring Judah and the warring empires of the Nile and Euphrates river-basins and is given an intimate interpretation of character construed from a close reading between the lines of biblical texts. He is revealed as a very human person with a tender heart shrinking from harsh utterance, driven and strengthened by the Vision of God.

A deeply sensed yet elusive mysticism pervades the verse of Alice M. Knight in *The Immortals* (Daniel). Her subjects are Brigid and Persephone and their personification in chosen individuals of the human race, particularly those who practise the arts and live close to nature. The poetry can be felt better than quoted, though there are many lovely descriptive passages and urgent lines of a philosophy of life (with, it must be admitted, occasional lapses into pedestrianism):

January snowdrops, bravest of all flowers,
First-coming in the depth of winter sleep,
February crocus, to re-light the flame
Of life again to win another year,
March daffodils to catch the truant wind,
April primroses and violets,
Like smiles and tears, her sunlight and her showers,
May-blossom, starring every country hedge
Above, and low beneath, anemones,
Windflowers, the very tender ghosts of flowers,
June, the wild rose, faint coral on the hedge,
. . . And so for every month throughout the year.

From the enterprising Favil Press come three small volumes. *Or Something* by Stewart Deas (3s.) is written in a style that suggests chippings of thought and imagery rather than sustained contemplation and imagination, yet the verses are often sharply provocative even when tiresomely subjective and despondent. In "The Refugee," however, he forgets about himself and the poem is very moving; especially in these lines. . . .

That was how I saw the song
the woman sang
on that old man's face. . . .

But as he listened
I saw the song alight there
and mould his features
to its own sweet shapeliness
so that he appeared happy
all pain lines removed.
But that was the song
took possession.

*The Death of Ned Kelly* by John Manifold (1s.) is written in true ballad spirit which has no truck with happy endings. Colloquial in tone, oblique in narrative, it and the other ballads have a seriousness based on sympathy with the outlaw and underdog, while " The Griesly Wife " is effectively simple and macabre. *All Dreaming Gone*, dedicated in particular to Peter Rich of the R.A.F., by Philip Sylvester (1s.), is notable for its fine group of sonnets written with a passion of affection and regret to unnamed and only partially guessed at friends, some young, some perhaps alien. There is a hint of the earlier Shakespeare sonnets about them and they are handled with boldness and restraint. One is pleasantly surprised by the battle-dress impressions. " Envoi " gives the best key to the pervading texture of thought :

There shall be no more princes of my heart ;
Oh, it is time I from your bondage passed !
No prince succeeding shall take up your part :
Of all the lost of love you are the last.
For you take all I should to England give,
And, seeing you, those powers to sorrow steep
That should help bombers dusk or fighters live,
Or lightless hurtle U-boats down the deep.
I must break from you that my limbs may find
The strength to set the mine or lift the shell.
And, broken from you, my enchanted mind
Shall clear again in helping England well.

Yet you are England ! of her beauty born,
Her downs, her streams, her skies, her flowers, her corn.

Christine Chapin is another distinctive writer of sonnets, and about half of her *Poems 1921–1941* (Blackwell, 3s. 6d.) are in this form. With her, grief and regret are transcended by faith and love, so that even the most poignant poems touch a note of victory. Her range of feeling and imagination is a wide one embracing an acute sensitiveness to spiritual and earthly values ; and her own countryside wears a special significance :

One with the land that bred thee true and kind ;
One with her shy woods, with her quiet streams,

Flesh of her flesh, calm spirit of her dreams ;
Wise in the gentle greatness of her mind ;

Her simple ways are thine ; her hardihood ;
Her unassuming grandeur of the soul ;
Her shining truth ; enjoyment, sound and whole ;
Her secret tenderness ; her love of good.

Thine are her deep unspoken certainties ;
Her strong, slow pulse ; her patience and her power ;
Courage, the root, and gentleness, the flower
Of deathless beauty in her silent leas.

Sybil Powis, in *Upland and Valley* (Wilding, Shrewsbury), can also write deeply and intimately of the things she loves ; and the prayer of her invocation, which follows, partly gives an answer to us through her own creative writing :

Lord, set the pattern of this land
Clearly within me, so that I may keep,
Unmisted, the fine edge of hills on sky.
Let river, plain and the green acres stand
Bright as they do now, even in sleep.
Beyond sleep, etch them on eternity.

*Broom Magic*, a small collection of sonnets by James Crawford Milne, (Herald Press, Arbroath), shows a writer of sensibility and promise. His thoughts and feelings have as yet outrun the powers of his pen, for the sonnets, though carefully written, show some forcing of rhyme and irrelevance of metaphor, as if the chosen form was too difficult. The title poem gives a pleasing allusion to Linnaeus :

Upflaming broom makes pale, like strong desire,
The flowing, vivid green of grass and trees.
Flamboyant in the mad caressing breeze
It seems to rob all life of gay attire,
As if aware that gold is magic fire ;
A lambent flame that lights up land and seas,
And bends an awe-struck world to bended knees
In fearful homage to so great a pyre.
A beauty so intense withdraws the strain
Of all that was in hope of that to be,
Consuming darkly past alarms and fears,
To form instead a scintillating chain
Of purest gold for all the world to see. . . .
And life goes on anew with smiles for tears.

E. D. Bangay.

# "EURIPIDES THE HUMAN"

The books on Euripides have died down lately, and there has been time to assimilate new knowledge and to rebalance fresh but one-sided views. Dr. G. M. A. Grube has taken the opportunity to provide his contemporaries with a sane, calm, and clear statement of the outlook with which he, and others, can most reasonably understand and enjoy Euripides, either in Greek or in translations; in translation especially, it might be said, since his *Drama of Euripides* (Methuen, 22s. 6d.), deals principally with that part of Euripides which is not lost when his own language is replaced by another. The point of view is modern, and, by implicit, though not explicit, adoption of the results of the new poetic interpretation, Dr. Grube restores and improves the perspective; clearing away the distortions of past classical scholarship which has hypostatized and generalized occasional motives in the mind of Euripides till they have been exaggerated into imaginary laws of his art, so strange that they are scarcely compatible with art at all, and have led to refutable exaggerations of fact. Rather in the loosely leisured manner of recent Italian scholars, allowed by a commendable submissiveness on the part of the publishers, whose generosity in printed space seems to be equalled by their indulgence towards lack of point and scarcity of documentation, the present book very intelligently corrects past errors; errors, for example, concerning the meaning of the gods to Euripides, the supposed irrelevance of many choric odes, the presumed lack of unity in the plots, and the mechanics of the beginnings and ends of plays. After special treatments of such subjects, constituting Part I of 126 pages, there follow the 321 pages of Part II, consisting in treatments of the individual plays, in which the story is indicated and judgments added. I have hinted that the book might seem long and dull at first sight. It improves, however, on acquaintance. Again and again a character or a scene turns out to be better understood now than before. Facts are faced, including the pessimism of Euripides, and his assurance, so Greek and so modern too, that the Divine is not wholly good; and the facts are clearly, simply, and sometimes cleverly described, without the interference of theory and assumption. The book conveys even less than such books usually convey of the splendour, grace, and glory of a poet; this is no doubt intentional, but it is questionable whether, when all this is left aside, conclusions about the residue are as valid as they seem. However, there is no doubt that the tragic forces, especially in divine and human character, with their mutual contrasts, are exceptionally well displayed. The book is likely to be widely read, and to influence future views. That would be a good thing, since its writer has learnt more from those who understand the minds of great poets than most classical scholars; and to a considerable degree he himself understands, too, in his own right of historical and poetical imagination.

W. F. Jackson Knight.

University College, Exeter.

## IN MEMORIAM

WHEN memory's grail is filled up to the brim,
And on its gold your brilliant jewel shines,
It seems that time and change will never dim
That piercing thought, those scintillating lines
That carried me, like wings, far out of reach
To mental clouds of dizzied altitude,
Where we two walked, like gods, another beach,
And swam another sea in solitude.

And now that splendid mind is but a breath
Of the impersonal, timeless atmosphere,
Once active limbs are crumbled into death
Beyond the touch of human love or fear,
And like your Hurricane, with broken wing,
I have no heart to feel, no voice to sing. D. R. W. CARR.

We deeply regret to have to record the death of Mr. William Marshall, for many years actively associated with the Norwood and Kensington Centre of The Poetry Society and a member of the General and Executive Councils. A son of Mr. Frederic Marshall, K.C., and brother of Sir John Hubert Marshall, the distinguished archaeologist, whose work in India was the subject of a *Times* leader recently, he retired several years ago from practice as a solicitor in Dover Street, W., but maintained his keen interest in The Poetry Society to which he had become most devotedly attached. Although a very courteous and gentle man, he had a passion for righteousness and a vigorous contempt for hypocrisy, malice, meanness and subterfuge,—a wise and able and experienced councillor who was absolutely dependable in times of difficulty and crisis, his indomitable spirit unimpaired by severe physical handicaps he had to endure in recent years. He had many social gifts and a delicate, questing taste in poetry with an admirable turn of expression frequently finding outlet in the concise epigram. His latest address " To My Muse," to reach us was awaiting publication when we received the lamentable news of his sudden passing from the earthly scene he had graced and enjoyed :

Who has not felt his irresponsiveness—
His deep desire, yet failure to receive
Those visitings that on the insight press,
And wait the touch of genius to live.

Or, having drawn the image to his sense,
Amid the wild confusion that is there,
Who has not felt his dull incompetence
To give it form and faithful portraiture ?

## *THE POETS' FELLOWSHIP:*

## THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

Five contributors have sent admirable work, in every single case taking the form of short lyrics. These poems are, moreover, all of them quiet and meditative in nature, having no *direct* connection with the events of the time.

Not the least beautiful of these is N. K. Cruickshank's translation from Baudelaire *Moesta et Errabunda*, but in view of the very recent award to this author, and the number of other poems worthy of consideration, the Editor's suggestion is that this poem should be placed " hors concours." Also, as a translation it is in a somewhat different category.

Our award will then be divided between VERE ARNOT, Walton-on-Thames ; GRACE DOROTHY REEVES, London, N. ; SARAH HENTHORN, Oldham ; and E. CURT PETERS, Evesham. Of those names contained in the list of contributors " Highly Commended," N. K. Cruickshank has already been especially mentioned with the warmest praise.

### HIGHLY COMMENDED

T. E. Casson, Ulverston ;
E. B. W. Chappelow, Egham ;
N. K. Cruickshank, Stoke-by-Clare ;
Reginald C. Eva, Harrow ;
Gladys Hunkin, St. Ives ;
R. McKie, Brighton ;
C. Morton, Beaufort, Mon. ;
P. E. Proctor, Taplow ;
Harry Sefton, Lytham ;
Roberta Shuttleworth, Guildford;
Brenda Skene, Lustleigh ;
Margery Smith, Linby ;
J. P. Stevenson, Portsmouth ;
Charles Woodhouse, Haslemere ;
F. J. Woodward, Nottingham :

### COMMENDED

W. S. Barnard, Beckenham ;
Alice F. Barry, Lindfield ;
Harry Bates, West Bromwich ;
O. J. Beard, Manchester ;
Ellodë Collins, Bournemouth ;
Dorothy Rosetta Colls, Chorley Wood ;
A. H. Cordwell, Worthing ;
Eileen Dix, Beaconsfield ;
R. G. Duff, Teignmouth ;
Marguerite Edgelow, Aylesford ;
Michael Eastcott, Halesworth ;
Dulcie Eden Greville, Wakefield ;
J. W. G. Heaven, Ealing ;
W. Help, Wellington ;
Peter Higham, London, N.;
F. Jennings, Porlock ;
P. E. Leaver, Kelvedon ;
Editha Melbourne, Maidstone;
Ierne Ormsby, Thurgoland ;
Edith Franklin Parker, Wootton Bassett ;
T. Pittaway, Frome ;
Frances Pritchard, Bournemouth ;
Angela Raine, York ;
Charles E. Rice, Rotherham ;
Chloris Heaton Ross, Chesham ;
Joyce Rowe, Highgate, N. ;
E. M. Storr, Exmouth ;
Arthur Lynnford Smith, Wanstead ;
F. Lucas Thompson, Kingston-on-Thames ;
Dorothy Trail, Vancouver ;
Edith M. Walker, Bournemouth ;
Daniel West, Ventnor ;
R. D. Willmot, Yeovil ;
Margaret Woodhead, Elland.

# AN EXHORTATION TO YOUTH

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS addresses A SONG OF LIFE, to youthful Poets in love with Death, the result of reading the last issue of THE POETRY REVIEW:

You dream of death, you speak of death, you write
In pallid pages of autumnal sound.
Life you ignore, you know not. Love's delight
Omnipotent, for you is love's despite
In tears of parting delicately drowned.

Or was it ever so, that gentle death
With plenitude of undeservéd rest
Should woo the young with soft oblivion breath
And so, from light above and dark beneath
Give respite on a pre-maternal breast?

What shame is here! What foolish cold alarm!
Life is a friend, if you would have her so,
A mistress of unfathomable charm,
A raging tempest with a heart of calm,
A flame of joy veiled in the tears of woe.

Then sing of Life! Death is a dead man's song.
Life is the lone immortal, only God,
The endless right of death's eternal wrong,
The joy within a heart made newly strong,
The pilgrimage, the pilgrim and the road.

Come, sing of Life! The forms will droop and die
That Life, the wanton, gaily robed anew
May thrust her splendour to the laughing sky
Fling wide her vast occasion and defy
Death with his shrouded hands and cold adieu.

What know you of Life's beauty? Who shall tell
What none but in her living heart may know!
You who to Life would fairly bid farewell
Have you no song, no deathless Philomel
To light the falling darkness ere you go?

Then sing! Then sing! None sings that harbours fear.
Or do you tremble, fearful, at Life's door?
When roses bloom the naked thorns are near
Yet, sweet or bitter, shed no foolish tear.
Love life, and follow. Live, and fear no more!

WILD SWAN: for Ruth Pitter, in gratitude for her reading at Portman Square on October 4th of "The Swan Bathing," from Marguerite Edgelow, being "a genuine appreciation of a very true artist."

A brittle frost has hewn the stone of air
to fling it in a curve across the stream
encircling there a swan, whose wild white loveliness
is delicate and strange as weed out-combed.
And I remember that you too loved swans.

Beauty distilled in vision, scene and word—
this you have set forever here in memory
and we, having the lesser vision
are stirred, suddenly stirred and lifted
winging a moment's crystal flight beside the wild swan.

*To the Editor of* THE POETRY REVIEW

SIR,—I have been reading a very pleasant book, "*Pick and Choose*," *a Gallimaufry composed by Daniel George* (Life and Letters Series, Cape, 1940), and it occurs to me that the following quotations may be of interest to readers and writers of THE POETRY REVIEW.

(*a*) Si ton Esprit vent cacher
Les belles choses qu'il pense,
Dy-moy, qui peut t'empescher
De te servir du Silence?—*Francois Maynard*, 1546.

(*b*) Nothing in our Age, I have observ'd, is more preposterous than the *running Judgements* upon *Poetry* and *Poets*. . . Many writers perplexe their Readers and Hearers with meere *Non-sense*. Their writings need sunshine.—*Ben Jonson*, 1641.

(*c*) This indeed I observe to the *honour* of *Poets*; I never found them *covetous*, or *scrapingly-base*. . . . They are for the most part mighty lovers of their *pallates*. . . . And they *all* are friends to the *Grape* and *Liquor*.—*Owen Felltham*, 1670.

Surbiton, Surrey, September 9th. DENIS TURNER.

I am grateful for and much helped by your informative synoptical reviews such as those dealing with the new Methuen anthology, Prof. Neff's "Revolution in European Poetry," and "Fifteen Poets," to mention but a few recent surveys, combined with such illuminating introductory articles as "The Poetry of Wilfred Owen," "A Romanticism," the veteran W. Herbert Palmer on W. H. Auden, and the penetrating articles on Stephen Spender and T. S. Elliot in the current number. They afford guidance and instruction to a curious inquirer into poetry. But I don't think irreconcilable young versus age arguments carry us very far.

Manchester. E. T. FELLOWES.

In the Homage lines about W. H. Davies, by the Rev. A. Shirley Cripps in the May-June number, last line but two, please read "soared" for "scared."

[*Drawn up and published thirty years ago; now reprinted for general information.*]

# THE MANIFESTO OF THE POETRY SOCIETY

## A Declaration of Faith and Works

*Signed by Representative Members and endorsed by the Council*

THE Society believes and asserts that Poetry is not only the first, the oldest, and the most human of all arts, but is more than an art. "Poetry is to be called neither art nor science," declared Goethe, "but genius," for "not by art does the poet sing, but by power divine" (Plato), "redeeming from decay the visitations of the divinity in man" (Shelley).

The Society believes Poetry to be an inestimable personal, moral, and intellectual power; the interpreter of life and of the wonder and beauty of the world; an inspiring and consoling influence; and a cultural and ethical factor of the greatest importance. "The great value of Poetry is to carry the mind beyond and above the beaten, dusty, weary walks of ordinary life, to lift it into a purer element, and to breathe into it more profound and generous emotion. It reveals to us the loveliness of Nature, brings back the freshness of youthful feelings, revives the relish of simple pleasures, keeps unquenched the enthusiasm which warmed the spring-time of our being, strengthens our interests in human nature by vivid delineations of its tenderest and loftiest feelings, knits us by new ties with universal beings, and through the brightness of its prophetic visions helps faith to lay hold on the future life" (Channing on Milton).

The Society has been founded to obtain wider recognition for this value and use of Poetry, "to nourish the love of Poetry in the heart of man. In a material age there is much need to keep alive the imaginative side of human life . . . to stimulate the love of the Poets, and to spread far and wide their message to man" (Lord Coleridge as President).

By various practical means—by uniting in a great fellowship those who appreciate the value and mission of Poetry, and by endeavouring to bring others within its influence—this Society seeks to achieve these objects, and to show that "the Poet is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth and over all time" (Wordsworth).

As a primary essential step towards the realization of its objects the Society seeks the assistance and co-operation of all Educational Authorities, and urges them to facilitate and encourage the study of Poetry to a far greater extent than at present is done. The materialistic and scientific side of human nature and mind has received, and is receiving, an undue share of attention, and the Society asserts that the emotional and imaginative side of man requires equal if not more training than the materialistic. The evils consequent upon ill-regulated

untrained, and wild, emotional natures are too well known and too much deplored to need discussion—and it is the object and work of the Society to obtain for Poetry that educational consideration and practical usefulness which would correct the evils and make for steady progress in all that is beautiful and true in the world of imagination and emotion.

The Educational Authorities are therefore urged so to arrange the curriculum and time-table of schools under their charge that—

1. Poetry, in its widest and best sense, should be recognized as a necessary subject for study in all schools, and take its rightful place in the study of Art, with music and painting.

2. That teachers be urged to dwell upon the subject, especially with regard to that which leads to the higher virtues of gentleness, love of beauty for itself, and reverence.

3. That inducements be offered in schools in connection with the study of Poetry, and especially for intelligent reading and speaking, for reasons stated below.

4. That all Colleges and Training Colleges should institute a Chair of Poetry.

Recognizing that Poetry (like music) is written for sound rather than sight reading, and, to secure the proper appreciation of rhythm and the delicate beauty of words, should be read aloud, the Society is obliged to take cognizance of elocution, regarding it as the *technique* of an art. It is essential, therefore, that the Society should pay attention to elocutionary methods and attempt to reform and improve the art of reading and speaking, and repair the neglect and despite into which elocution and the use of the speaking-voice have fallen. The Society's attitude towards and practical concern for elocution and voice production or cultivation is thus justified, and its insistence on due regard being given to better and more intelligent methods of reading and speaking vindicated. Hence the Society's intrusion into the educational sphere, its diction examinations, and its encouragement of improved reading and recitation in schools.

It must be postulated that this regard for elocution and this use of recitations and recitals are but means to an end—the vocal interpretation of Poetry with a view to Poetry being more widely appreciated and understood. This technical phase of the Society's activities, if the higher claims were not admissible, gives it a *locus standi* in educational work, and enables it to secure attention for Poetry, to have Poetry more intelligently interpreted, and to show what exquisite pleasure can be derived from the rendering of Poetry by a beautiful, developed voice, thoroughly under the control of an intelligent brain. "For every poem exists its appropriate expression by the human voice—since poetry is capable of two appeals, silent and articulate—both equally forcible. The speaking of Poetry is one of the means by which the soul, through the medium of beautiful words, can express itself as it would, and all those dumb and faltering emotions which, though

usually inarticulate, are its life. It is when life is unable to endure the pain of silence that it breaks into a cry which is Poetry—and in Poetry all art is included. And certain temperaments cannot find their true expression save in the words of others—and these belong to the ideal speaker of verse " (Lady Margaret Sackville's presidential address on " The Art of Speaking Verse ").

By the careful selection of competent teachers, and by greater regard being given to intelligent reading and speaking and to the use of the finest and most distinctive human organ, the voice, the Society hopes to secure more adequate recognition of the educative, formative value of Poetry, which, as Wordsworth says in what Mr. William Watson describes as " the finest definition of Poetry on record," " is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge, the impassioned expression on the countenance of science." An eminent educationist has said that in the education of the young Poetry should have the first place, and Darwin testified to the moral and intellectual deterioration likely to result from the neglect of Poetry when he declared, " If I had to live my life again I would have made a rule to read some Poetry and listen to some music at least every week, for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied might have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral nature by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature."

The Society cannot insist too strongly on the spiritual value of Poetry. It is the expression of the man who feels the significance and mystery of life, and has been dowered with the genius to handle it, to enlarge our emotions and feelings, to widen the gates of belief, to " catch the voice that wanders earth with spiritual summons dreamed or heard." Whitman says, " The profoundest service that poems or any other writings can do for their reader is not merely to satisfy the intellect, or supply something polished and interesting, or even to depict great passions or persons or events, but to fill him with vigorous manliness, religiousness, and give him a good heart as a radical possession and habit."

A further great educational advantage of the use of Poetry is the acquisition of a sense of the beauty of words. No easier or better way of obtaining a sense of the right use, value and music of words and of their beauty can be found than by the reading and memorizing of Poetry —the finest thoughts and the most delicate imagery expressed in the most beautiful and precise words. This sense of the beauty and value of words is a most important part of the value to be derived from reciting and reading aloud, and is emphasized by the Examiners of the Society (see Mr. Forbes Robertson's address at the September, 1910, audition).

Finally, the Society would insist most strongly that Poetry is not a contemplative affair and is not divorced from life. Reality lies in emotional contact. The Poet either reflects or arouses emotion, and

shares the gift he brings, and is thus always and in all lands the dear comrade of men—inspirer, consoler, and interpreter. The appeal of Poetry is universal, a feeling and taste for it existing, as Carlyle points out, in the heart of every man, difficult though it be to find and rouse. But stimulated and cultivated, we should all be able to confess, in the words of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, that "Poetry has been to me an exceeding great reward; it has soothed my affliction; it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments, it has endeared my solitude, and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the Good and the Beautiful in all that meets and surrounds me."

The Society, by and through local centres and other methods, will keep alive the poetic spirit, but relies on all interested in Poetry and the world's spiritual and cultural progress to use their influence, privately and publicly, to secure the better recognition of Poetry as a great moral, intellectual, and recreative force.

Signed, on behalf of the Society:

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|---|---|
| Handley Dunelm. | C. Oscar Gridley. |
| Avebury. | Maurice Hewlett. |
| Dunsany. | E. Lyttelton. |
| Alfred East. | Frank Marzials. |
| J. Forbes-Robertson. | F. Frankfort Moore. |
| John Galsworthy. | Walter W. Skeat. |

Galloway Kyle, Hon. Director.

## THE SECRET HURTS

OH, leave me not to lie alone.
The long, lean fingers of approaching dawn
Tear wide night's curtains
and the wet-hemmed lawn
Blurs my window to the shrill, blue light
And chills my quivering flesh.
The muffled drone
Of alien wings covers the sky with sound
And hollow-gourded war drums shake the ground,
Drowning the lonely, individual groan . . .
Oh, leave me not to lie alone.
For terror and the bomb-begotten prayer
These are companionable fears that one may share;
And such I bear.
But secret hurts, the dread that creeps apart
In the dark corners of a cowering heart,
These prove the stumbling block, the scorpioned stone . . .

Oh, leave me not to lie alone!

Joyce T. Rowe.

1942

The Poetry Society
London